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Dedicated to Dads: Lessons from the Early Head Start Fatherhood Demonstration

Final Report

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Prepared for:

Frankie A. Gibson
Administration on Children, Youth and Families
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Washington, DC

Prepared by:

Jeanne Bellotti
Cheri Vogel
Andrew Burwick
Charles Nagatoshi
Melissa Ford
Barbara Schiff
Welmoet van Kammen
Mathematica Policy Research, Inc.
Princeton, NJ

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Despite the common misconception, most low-income fathers are *not* missing. They are present and involved in the lives of their children (Vogel et al. 2003). These fathers are important contributors to both the emotional and financial support of their children. A growing volume of research on fatherhood confirms the importance of father involvement in the lives and education of their children (Cabrera et al. 2000; Coley 2001; Levine 1998; McBride et al. 1999; Nord 1997; Tamis-LeMonda and Cabrera 2002; and Vogel et al. 2003). Acting on these findings, federal agencies have been developing and enhancing fatherhood policies to promote the positive involvement of fathers in child and family programs, such as Head Start and Early Head Start.

In February 2001, the Administration on Children, Youth and Families (ACYF) partnered with the Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE) to fund 21 Early Head Start fatherhood demonstration projects. Selected through a competitive process, the demonstration grantees were funded for three years to develop and implement creative practices that would lead to increased involvement of fathers in Early Head Start programs and in the lives of their children. In addition, the grantees were expected to establish partnerships with their local OCSE and other community resources to increase the availability and efficient delivery of services appropriate to the interests and needs of fathers. While ACYF provided these basic guidelines for demonstration activities, grantees were given great flexibility in developing their local program goals and service structure for the fatherhood initiative. Little was known at the start of the demonstration about the most effective ways to involve more fathers in Early Head Start. Because of this, the demonstration grantees were charged with developing and testing new strategies for engaging men in program activities and meeting their unique needs as fathers.

OVERVIEW OF THE EVALUATION

Shortly after awarding the demonstration grants, ACYF and OCSE commissioned a study by Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. (MPR) to conduct an evaluation of the father involvement strategies developed by the participating Early Head Start programs through the first two years of the demonstration. The study is designed to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the roles of low-income fathers in the lives of the young children served by the Early Head Start fatherhood demonstration grantees? How have the grantees attempted to affect changes and continuities in fathers' involvement with their children?

2. What staffing patterns have the grantees implemented to deliver comprehensive services to meet the diverse needs of Early Head Start families, especially fathers? How well have these staffing structures worked? What staff training was needed to increase the knowledge and sensitivity of staff and thus facilitate father involvement?
3. What strategies have the demonstration programs developed to involve fathers in program activities and the lives of mothers and children?
4. How do the parenting roles of mothers and fathers interact? In what ways have demonstration programs attempted to increase permanent parenting relationships?
5. How have the grantees attempted to increase fathers' ability to provide for their children financially? To what extent have the programs promoted voluntary, established legal paternity among unwed fathers and mothers?
6. To what extent have the relationships between programs and the local OCSE changed over time? How have partnerships between programs and other community resources developed in order to facilitate service delivery for Early Head Start fathers?

MPR gathered both qualitative and quantitative data in three ways. First, researchers conducted two rounds of site visits to the 21 demonstration grantees in winter 2001-2002 and winter 2002-2003. The visits consisted of a series of in-depth interviews with Early Head Start staff, focus groups with participating fathers, and interviews with liaisons from local Offices of Child Support Enforcement.¹ Second, at the time of the second site visit, staff members in each participating program were asked to complete questionnaires about their fatherhood initiatives.² Third, each program provided MPR with a list of the children enrolled at the time of the second visit. Using these lists, MPR generated Father/Father Figure Information Forms for each child in the program. Local staffs were asked to complete one form for each father or father figure involved in the child's life.³

¹ The study's interim report details key findings from the first year of implementation, based on the site visits conducted to the 21 demonstration grantees during winter 2001-2002 (Bellotti 2002).

² The staff surveys were modeled on an instrument used in the Ford Foundation practitioner study (Raikes et al. 2002).

³ Father/Father Figure Information Forms were completed by grantee staff, based on their knowledge of the children and fathers participating in the program. These data reflect only those fathers about whom the Early Head Start staff are aware and do not represent the responses of fathers themselves.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF THE FATHERS SERVED BY THE DEMONSTRATION

The demonstration programs identified a total of 1,871 children enrolled in Early Head Start at the time of the second round of site visits. For each child enrolled, program staff provided information on whether the biological father or a father figure was involved in the child's life. MPR received information about father involvement for 1,743 of the children, or 93 percent of the total sample. Of these children, program staff reported that 79 percent had at least one father or father figure who was currently involved in their lives.

Of the fathers identified by program staff, nearly 84 percent were the biological father of an enrolled child, while 16 percent were father figures. About 40 percent of all identified men were married to the child's mother. More than 70 percent of fathers lived with their children—although fathers and father figures of children served by urban programs were less likely than those in rural or mixed-setting programs to be living in the home. Further, these fathers and father figures were less likely to be married to the mother of the child.

In general, many fathers engaged in at least some program activities. Staff reported that about 71 percent of the fathers and father figures involved in their children's lives had participated in at least one Early Head Start activity in the past six months. Compared to men who were involved with their children but did not participate in Early Head Start, fathers and father figures who engaged in the program were more likely to be living with the child and to be married to the child's mother.

Participating fathers and father figures were 30 years old, on average; fewer than 8 percent were younger than age 21. Of all fathers and father figures engaged in the program, approximately 60 percent had completed high school or received a general equivalency degree (GED), and almost 75 percent were employed. More than half of fathers who did not work received medical assistance (68 percent) and food stamps (59 percent).

According to staff reports, most fathers were very satisfied (76 percent) or somewhat satisfied (18 percent) with the usual amount of time they spent with their children. Staff reported, however, that only 46 percent of nonresident biological fathers were very satisfied. In fact, among nonresident biological fathers, nearly 22 percent were somewhat or very dissatisfied with the time they were able to spend with their children, and 46 percent were reported as facing at least one barrier to involvement with their child.

LESSONS LEARNED

The experiences of the Early Head Start Fatherhood Demonstration grantees can help guide policymakers, program administrators, and practitioners as they design and implement new initiatives to increase fathers' involvement in Early Head Start programs and the lives of their children. Through the evaluation of the first two years of demonstration operation, we have derived a number of operational lessons about designing, implementing, and supporting such fatherhood initiatives.

Lessons on Fatherhood Staffing Structures

- ***Choosing a fatherhood staffing structure.*** Staffing structures that feature a fatherhood coordinator and one or more male involvement specialists appear to facilitate the effective allocation of responsibility for fatherhood work. While other staffing structures may be less expensive and may work under the right conditions, they also appear to have some significant disadvantages.
- ***Determining the qualifications of fatherhood staff.*** To engage fathers effectively, fatherhood staff need academic qualifications paired with strong interpersonal and communication skills. Training in social work and experience in community organizing were common among demonstration staff. Programs found that personal and professional abilities, such as charisma, familiarity with the community, and experience with program administration, also made staff more effective. In addition, many fathers felt more comfortable discussing personal needs with male, as opposed to female, fatherhood staff.
- ***Hiring fathers as staff members.*** Participating or “graduate” fathers may serve as a valuable pool of potential staff candidates. Depending on the fathers’ backgrounds and previous work experience, supervisors may find it necessary to provide fathers with substantial professional mentoring in order to ease their transition into a staff role and the Early Head Start work environment.
- ***Encouraging communication between fatherhood and other Early Head Start staff.*** Frequent communication among fatherhood and other Early Head Start staff facilitates father involvement in all aspects of the program. Fatherhood staff who were integrated into an existing Early Head Start staff unit, as well as those who had an “open-door policy” for questions appeared better able to coordinate comprehensive services for Early Head Start families.
- ***Weathering fatherhood staff turnover.*** More than half of the demonstration programs lost one or more members of their fatherhood staff during two years of implementation. Programs that had some advance notice of staff departures or that hired replacement staff from within the organization had less difficulty dealing with staff turnover. Involving all Early Head Start staff in providing services for fathers also helped programs weather staff turnover without major disruption to their efforts to engage fathers.

Lessons on Making Programs Father-Friendly

- ***Training staff for work with fathers.*** Some female staff members may have had negative personal experiences with men, and that these experiences can sometimes color their attitudes toward engaging fathers in the program. According to staff reports, internal staff training sessions on the importance of father involvement can be successful in making staff more receptive to including men.
- ***Evaluating all Early Head Start staff on their work with fathers.*** Evaluating the efforts of staff to involve fathers is another way to send a clear signal to staff that father involvement is an important, and expected, part of their jobs.
- ***Providing fathers with personal staff attention.*** Inviting fathers in person and by telephone to the program's events shows fathers that they are welcome and appreciated at Early Head Start. All Early Head Start staff can also be encouraged to learn fathers' names, engage fathers in short conversations, invite them to participate in the classroom and home visits, and extend invitations to special program events.
- ***Overcoming resistance from mothers.*** Staff in several demonstration programs reported that they encountered resistance from mothers about including fathers. Programs may benefit from allowing staff sufficient time to redouble their efforts to address mothers' concerns and encourage them to cooperate with fathers, in instances where the program does not have a legitimate reason for excluding the father. In cases where mothers are resentful of special services for fathers, creating parallel activities and groups for mothers may ease these tensions.
- ***Allowing staff time and flexibility to work with fathers when they are available.*** Program directors may find it important to evaluate whether staff members have sufficient time to recruit fathers during regular work hours. The barriers posed by fathers' work schedule may be addressed through program policies that allow staff flexibility in scheduling their work when fathers are available (and in staffing willingness to adapt their schedules in these ways). Giving staff sufficient time to reach out to men and allowing this type of flexibility in their work schedules may also help make it clear to the staff that fathers are expected to participate fully in the program and encourage them to promote fathers' involvement from the beginning of enrollment.
- ***Making the physical program environment father-friendly.*** Displaying positive images of men and ensuring that male staff and fathers are present whenever possible in reception areas and classrooms helps convey that Early Head Start is a program for fathers, as well as mothers and children.

- ***Assessing staff perceptions of progress toward father-friendliness.*** We suggest that program directors continually assess their staff member's perceptions of progress toward program goals and implement some of the strategies discussed above to help establish the idea of father involvement and provide staff with the time and resources to do the work well.

Lessons on Getting and Keeping Fathers Involved

- ***Involving fathers in Early Head Start family enrollment.*** Programs might consider revising their enrollment procedures to ensure that fathers are present during the enrollment process whenever possible, to highlight the fatherhood program regardless of whether the father is able to attend and to collect father information through enrollment forms. Enrollment staff might also develop a mechanism for passing father enrollment information to the staff members responsible for male recruitment.
- ***Making all staff responsible for engaging fathers.*** Fatherhood staff naturally have responsibility for reaching out to fathers. However, other Early Head Start staff members also have many points of contact with fathers and may succeed in reaching out to them.
- ***Taking advantage of every opportunity to engage fathers.*** Program staff can think of ways to include fathers in all phases of their work. When fathers drop off or pick up their children from Early Head Start centers, teachers and other program staff present have an opportunity to relay information about programs, invite them into the classroom, or just talk to fathers about their children's day. Providing food or other refreshments during these times is another way for staff and fathers to get to know each other. Further, home visitors can try to engage fathers who are present at the time of visits, regardless of whether the father chooses to participate actively.
- ***Mailing information and invitations to fathers.*** While mailings to fathers were one of the most common strategies that demonstration programs used to recruit fathers, many staff did not find them useful. Programs serving migrant or transient populations found mailings especially unproductive. Given the lack of success reported by demonstration staff, we suggest that program directors or fatherhood staff reassess the characteristics of the population they serve before determining the volume and frequency of mailings that would be most appropriate for their program.

Lessons on Service Offerings and Referrals for Fathers

- ***Assessing fathers' needs.*** The demonstration programs had difficulty involving fathers in the family partnership agreement (FPA) process that allows families to identify their strengths and needs and set their own goals.

Nevertheless, the experience of the demonstration projects shows that fathers of Early Head Start children have an array of needs that must be addressed; yet these needs may go unmet if programs do not become more proactive in engaging fathers in the FPA process or in finding alternative ways to provide similar services.

- ***Providing fathers with opportunities to bond with their children and families.*** Fathers reported enjoying “daddy and me” time in which to play and bond with their children. The demonstration programs enjoyed success in offering holiday events and low-budget activities that families can replicate on their own. Programs may also wish to consider holding family events that recognize children’s accomplishments at various points throughout the year.
- ***Supporting positive co-parenting relationships.*** Most of the demonstration programs found a focus on co-parenting consistent with their program goals and responsive to family needs. Many staff members, however, did not feel comfortable providing advice to couples who were experiencing problems with their relationship. To help support positive co-parenting, programs can strengthen partnerships with other local agencies—such as mental health professionals, marriage and family services, and anger management counselors—that could serve as referrals for parents in need of such assistance. Programs with enough interest from parents and staff expertise might also consider offering co-parenting workshops for participating parents.
- ***Encouraging father participation in child development services.*** Many fathers appear to be more comfortable participating in child development services when they are given clearly delineated roles. When working with fathers who hesitate to interact with children, teachers and home visitors can try to direct fathers toward concrete activities while explaining how the activity will benefit their children’s growth. Such activities can include developmentally appropriate play, arts and crafts, help with meals, and reading books. Also, having male staff and other participating fathers present in centers may help fathers feel more comfortable participating. Several programs found that some fathers were most receptive when they were able to use their existing trade skills to help improve the center facilities and grounds.
- ***Developing successful support groups for fathers.*** Nearly all of the demonstration grantees offered some form of peer support for fathers. Programs found that listening to fathers’ interests and needs, and adjusting the structure, content, and timing of their meetings accordingly improved attendance. Offering father-only activities, such as sporting events or camping trips, is another opportunity for staff and fathers to get to know each other and develop mutual trust. In addition, demonstration programs found that offering men incentives—such as food, T-shirts, gym memberships, and even cash payments—for their participation was useful in keeping them coming back to group meetings.

- ***Helping fathers find stable employment in better-paying jobs.*** To increase fathers' ability to support their children financially, program staff might consider strengthening their ability to offer direct employment and training services or to link fathers with local agencies that offer those services. Simply providing information about these local agencies may not be sufficient to encourage them to take advantage of such services. Instead, many fathers feel more comfortable using referrals when an Early Head Start staff member accompanies them to the local agency or puts them in contact with a counselor who is familiar with the Early Head Start fatherhood program.

Lessons on Partnerships with Local OCSE

- ***Facilitating child support workshops for fathers.*** Several fatherhood coordinators commented on how difficult it was to get fathers to attend child support workshops. Many fathers are hostile toward OCSE and may be more willing to attend workshops on child support that are led by the fatherhood staff or a representative from a legal service agency. When possible, the programs may also consider developing linkages with access and visitation programs.
- ***Offering separate child support workshops for mothers.*** In light of resistance from many mothers to involving fathers, it may be important to have child support workshops for mothers and grandparents to highlight how father involvement can benefit their children both economically and emotionally. We suggest holding separate workshops for mothers and fathers, to allow open and honest discussion.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Despite the common misconception, most low-income fathers are *not* missing. They are present and involved in the lives of their children (Vogel et al. 2003). These fathers act as important contributors to both the emotional and financial support of their children. A growing volume of research on fatherhood confirms the importance of father involvement in the lives and education of their children (Cabrera et al. 2000; Coley 2001; Levine 1998; McBride et al. 1999; Nord 1997; Tamis-LeMonda and Cabrera 2002; and Vogel et al. 2003). Additional studies have helped to identify the potential role of two-generation programs, such as Early Head Start, in promoting such father involvement. One recent study by Fagan and Iglesias (1999) suggests a positive association between high levels of participation in Head-Start-based intervention programs and increased father involvement with children.

Acting on these findings, federal agencies have been developing and enhancing fatherhood policies to promote the positive involvement of fathers in child and family programs, such as Head Start and Early Head Start. Since its inception in 1995, the federal Fatherhood Initiative has brought several key government agencies together to evaluate the role of fathers in national policies and programs. Welfare reform (or the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996) created heightened emphasis on paternity establishment and enforcement of child support judgments. These efforts have stimulated both a shift in public policy and new national studies of father involvement.

The momentum of the fatherhood movement continues as the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) has identified father involvement as a continuing priority for the federal government. A variety of grassroots organizations, state-funded programs, and federally mandated initiatives have expanded the effort to provide fathers with the tools they need to become emotionally involved with, and financially responsible for, their children. Included in this effort is a greater attempt to involve fathers within the federal Early Head Start program.

In February 2001, Administration on Children, Youth and Families (ACYF) partnered with the Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE) to fund 21 Early Head Start

fatherhood demonstration projects. Selected through a competitive process, the demonstration grantees were funded for three years to develop and implement creative practices that would lead to increased involvement of fathers in Early Head Start and in the lives of their children. Each grantee was expected to establish partnerships with the local OCSE and other community resources to increase the availability and efficient delivery of services appropriate to the interests and needs of fathers. To improve their ability to serve fathers effectively, programs also were expected to enhance the skills and sensitivity of Early Head Start staff working with fathers. While ACYF provided these basic guidelines for demonstration activities, grantees were given great flexibility in developing their goals and service structure for the fatherhood initiative. Little was known at the start of the demonstration about the most effective ways to involve more fathers in Early Head Start. As such, the demonstration grantees were charged with developing and testing new strategies for engaging men in program activities and meeting their unique needs as fathers.

This report details the progress of the Early Head Start Fatherhood Demonstration grantees through their first two years of implementation and identifies interesting practices emerging from their efforts to involve fathers in Early Head Start and the lives of their children. The rest of this chapter describes the evaluation design and methodology and provides an overview of the fatherhood demonstration grantees and the families they serve. Chapter II examines the staffing structures programs adopted to meet the needs of fathers. Chapter III analyzes the strategies that programs used to become more “father-friendly,” including staff perceptions of progress toward that goal. Chapter IV discusses program efforts to engage fathers and father figures in program activities. Chapter V describes the range of activities that programs offered to men and examines the operational lessons that emerged from the experiences of the demonstration grantees and participating fathers. Finally, Chapter VI describes the evolution of partnerships between the grantees and their local OCSE.

OVERVIEW OF THE EVALUATION

Shortly after awarding the demonstration grants, ACYF and OCSE commissioned a study by Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. (MPR) to collect information on the models developed by the participating Early Head Start programs. An Early Head Start practitioners study funded by the Ford Foundation (Raikes et al. 2002) served as the precursor to this evaluation. As part of that study, all Early Head Start programs nationwide were invited to participate in a voluntary survey on their father involvement activities. Findings from the survey suggest that many Early Head Start programs were increasing efforts to involve fathers and father figures in program activities. Throughout their efforts, however, programs faced numerous barriers—for example, fathers’ work schedules, conflicts between mothers and fathers, and fathers who were incarcerated or were experiencing substance abuse problems. As a result, most programs were still in the early stages of development in becoming father-friendly. Therefore, it is critical to promote collaboration between researchers and practitioners and thus build on these early experiences in identifying successful practices that can promote responsible fatherhood. The evaluation of the Early Head Start Fatherhood Demonstration aimed at building on this volume of research by

identifying the strategies that appear most successful in engaging the fathers of Early Head Start children.

Research Questions

The evaluation of the Early Head Start Fatherhood Demonstration is designed to provide a detailed look at the evolution of program implementation and participants' experiences through the first two years of the demonstration. It examines both the challenges that programs faced in creating and sustaining fatherhood initiatives, and their progress toward involving fathers in Early Head Start and the lives of their children. The study is designed to answer the following research questions:

- What are the roles of low-income fathers in the lives of the young children served by the Early Head Start fatherhood demonstration grantees? How have the grantees attempted to affect changes and continuities in fathers' involvement with their children?
- What staffing patterns have the grantees implemented to deliver comprehensive services to meet the diverse needs of Early Head Start families, especially fathers? How well have these staffing structures worked? What staff training was needed to increase the knowledge and sensitivity of staff and thus facilitate father involvement?
- What strategies have the demonstration programs developed to involve fathers in program activities and in the lives of mothers and children?
- How do the parenting roles of mothers and fathers interact? In what ways have demonstration programs attempted to increase permanent parenting relationships?
- How have the grantees attempted to increase fathers' ability to provide for their children financially? To what extent have the programs promoted voluntary, established legal paternity among unwed fathers and mothers?
- To what extent have the relationships between programs and the local OCSE changed over time? How have partnerships between programs and other community resources developed in order to facilitate service delivery for Early Head Start fathers?

This study looks at fathers and their children in the context of the demonstration programs. It focuses on the range of strategies that programs have employed to increase father participation in Early Head Start and, in turn, their involvement with their children. The role that fathers play in the lives of their children was explored only in this limited scope. As discussed earlier, a growing number of research studies provide a more comprehensive look at father-child interactions and how the quality and quantity of fathers' involvement with their children influence child outcomes. As Early Head Start programs

continue their efforts to involve more fathers, on-going research should continue to expand upon findings that confirm the importance of fathers in fostering child development.

Since the grantees were purposefully selected for this demonstration through solicitation of competitive grants, their experiences are not representative of Early Head Start programs nationwide. In addition, the study was not designed to measure program impacts, and thus does not include data collection for a control or comparison group that did not receive demonstration services. For these reasons, we cannot estimate the effect the Early Head Start fatherhood demonstration may have had on participating fathers or their families. The evaluation does, however, provide rich information about program operations and emerging practices that will be useful to policymakers and practitioners as they continue their efforts to support father involvement in Early Head Start.

Data Sources and Collection

To assess the grantees' experiences during the first two years of implementation, MPR gathered both qualitative and quantitative data using three collection methods:

1. ***Site Visits.*** MPR researchers conducted two rounds of site visits to the 21 demonstration grantees. Conducted in winter 2001 and winter 2002, the visits consisted of a series of in-depth interviews with Early Head Start directors, fatherhood staff, family workers, home visitors, and teachers. Researchers also conducted focus groups with participating fathers at each program and interviewed liaisons from local Offices of Child Support Enforcement.
2. ***Staff Surveys.*** At the time of the second site visit, staff members at each participating program were asked to complete questionnaires about their fatherhood initiatives. The questionnaires covered the number and types of fathers the programs sought to involve, the actual level of father involvement in various activities, the strategies programs employed to increase father participation in services, and the perceived barriers and successes of father involvement in their Early Head Start programs.¹ Separate versions of the survey were developed for directors, father coordinators, family workers and home visitors, and teachers. In home-based programs, the teacher version was not administered.
3. ***Father/Father Figure Information Forms.*** Each program also provided MPR with a list of the children enrolled in their program at the time of the second visit. Using these lists, MPR generated Father/Father Figure Information Forms for each child in the program. Local staff were asked to complete one form for each father or father figure involved in the child's life. The forms included items on the demographic characteristics of the child and the

¹ The staff surveys were modeled on an instrument used in the Ford Foundation practitioner study discussed earlier (Raikes et al. 2002).

child's father or father figure, the father's relationship to the child, his education and employment, involvement with child support, relationship and involvement with the child's mother, challenges he faces in finding and keeping a job, and participation in Early Head Start services.²

The staff survey achieved an overall response rate of 93 percent, with 76 of the 82 potential respondents replying to the survey. Early Head Start directors and fatherhood coordinators from 19 of the 21 programs completed the survey. A representative home visitor or family worker from 20 programs responded. Finally, of the 19 programs that offered center-based services, 18 programs returned surveys completed by a representative teacher.

The data collection through the Father/Father Figure Information Forms also was successful. A total of 1,871 children were identified on the program enrollment lists. We received information on fathers and father figures of 1,743 children, or 93 percent of the total sample. With the exception of one program that returned only 47 percent of the forms, all the programs returned Father/Father Figure Information Forms for more than 85 percent of enrolled children.

The study's interim report (Bellotti 2002) documents the demonstration programs' development through the first year of funding based on the site visits conducted to the 21 grantees during fall and winter 2001. It discusses the main features of the new fatherhood programs and identifies the challenges and successes they experienced during the initial phase of implementation. The interim report also contains detailed profiles of each fatherhood initiative at the time of these first round visits. This second report focuses on the grantee's experiences through the second year of implementation using key findings from all three qualitative and quantitative data sources.

OVERVIEW OF THE EARLY HEAD START FATHERHOOD DEMONSTRATION

Early Head Start, a comprehensive, two-generation program that began in 1995, extended Head Start services to low-income pregnant women and families with infants and toddlers up to age 3. The program focuses on enhancing children's development while at the same time strengthening families. In 2002, some 650 programs across the nation served more than 62,000 children. Findings from the National Early Head Start Research and

² Father/Father Figure Information Forms were completed by grantee staff based on their knowledge of the children and fathers participating in the program. These data reflect only those fathers of whom the Early Head Start staff are aware and do not represent the responses of fathers themselves.

Evaluation project³ indicate that the program had modest positive impacts on 3-year-old Early Head Start children in cognitive, language, and social-emotional development when they were compared to a control group. In addition, their parents scored higher than control group parents on such aspects of the home environment as parenting behavior and knowledge of infant-toddler development. The evaluation also found that, even though few programs had implemented formal initiatives to increase father involvement, Early Head Start influenced father participation in such activities as home visits, parenting classes and events, and parent-child activities (Administration for Children and Families 2002).⁴

Building on these experiences, the Early Head Start Fatherhood Demonstration sought to inform both practitioners and policymakers about the promising strategies for promoting greater father involvement in Early Head Start. ACYF selected a diverse mix of fatherhood demonstration grantees that operate Early Head Start programs across the country. Below, we describe the characteristics of the demonstration grantees, the children they serve, and the fathers and father figures involved in their lives.

Who Are the Early Head Start Fatherhood Demonstration Grantees?

The Early Head Start programs operated by the 21 demonstration grantees reflect a range of geographic locations, urban and rural service delivery areas, and service approaches (see Table I.1). The grantees are located in 8 of the 10 DHHS geographic service regions and include a Migrant/Seasonal and an American Indian/Alaska Native program (Figure I.1). The size of the Early Head Start programs operated by the grantees varied substantially, with six programs serving fewer than 75 children, eight serving between 75 and 125 children, and seven serving 125 or more children.

All Early Head Start programs design the services and program options they offer, based on family and community needs. For research purposes, programs can be categorized according to the Early Head Start service options they offer to *families*.⁵

³ Commissioned by ACF, the national evaluation was conducted by MPR, in conjunction with the Columbia University Center for Children and Families and the Early Head Start Research Consortium.

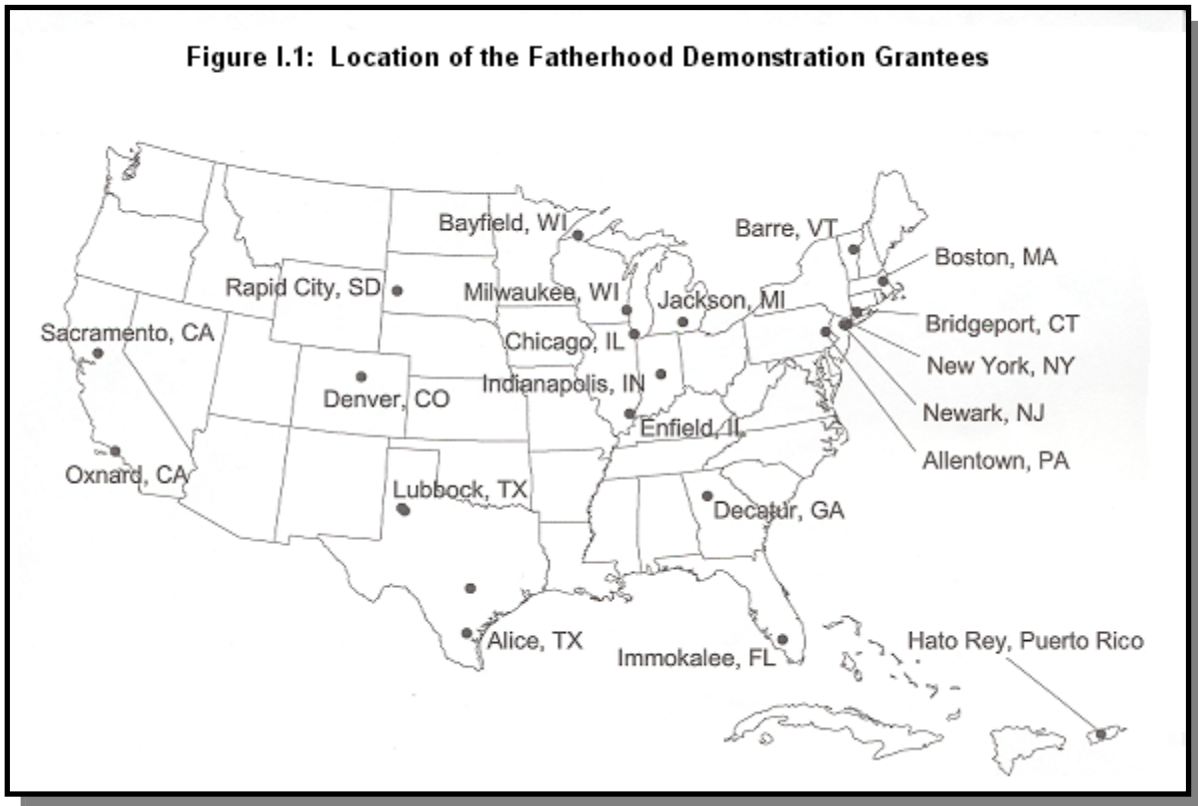
⁴ Several strains of father studies were funded under the umbrella of the larger evaluation. These studies were supported by the Ford Foundation, the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, ACYF, the office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE) within DHHS. For additional information about the studies, visit www.mathematica-mpr.com

⁵ These program approaches were defined for research purposes in the Early Head Start Research and Evaluation project (ACF 2000). *Mixed approach* is a research term and is not used in the revised Head Start Program Performance Standards.

Table I.1: Overview of the Early Head Start Fatherhood Demonstration Programs

Agency Name	City, State	Program Approach	Service Delivery Area
DHHS Region 1			
Central Vermont Community Action Council	Barre, VT	Mixed-Approach	Rural
Action for Bridgeport Community Development	Bridgeport, CT	Center-Based	Urban
Action for Boston Community Development, Inc.	Boston, MA	Mixed Approach	Urban
DHHS Region 2			
Educational Alliance	New York, NY	Center-Based	Urban
New York Foundling	Hato Rey, PR	Mixed Approach	Urban/Rural
Babyland Family Services	Newark, NJ	Mixed Approach	Urban
DHHS Region 3			
Community Services for Children	Allentown, PA	Home-Based	Urban
DHHS Region 4			
Redland Christian Migrant Association	Immokalee, FL	Mixed Approach	Rural
Partnership for Community Action	Decatur, GA	Center-Based	Urban
DHHS Region 5			
Community Action Agency	Jackson, MI	Mixed Approach	Urban/Rural
Next Door Foundation	Milwaukee, WI	Home-Based	Urban
Provido-Leyden Council for Community Action, Inc. and The Children's Center of Cicero/Berwyn	Maywood and Cicero, IL	Mixed Approach	Urban/Suburban
Family Development Service, Inc.	Indianapolis, IN	Center-Based	Urban
Red Cliff Band of Lake Superior Chippewa	Bayfield, WI	Mixed Approach	Rural
Wabash Area Development, Inc.	Enfield, IL	Mixed Approach	Rural
DHHS Region 6			
Community Action Corporation of South Texas	Alice, TX	Mixed Approach	Rural
Texas Tech University	Lubbock, TX	Mixed Approach	Suburban
DHHS Region 8			
Family Star	Denver, CO	Center-Based	Urban
Youth and Family Services	Rapid City, SD	Mixed Approach	Urban/Rural
DHHS Region 9			
Sacramento Employment and Training Agency	Sacramento, CA	Mixed Approach	Urban/Rural/Suburban
Child Development Resources of Ventura County	Oxnard, CA	Mixed Approach	Urban / Rural

Figure I.1: Location of the Fatherhood Demonstration Grantees



- *Center-based programs*, providing services to families through center-based child care and education, parent education, and a minimum of two home visits per year to each family
- *Home-based programs*, providing all services to families through weekly home visits and at least two group socializations per month for each family
- *Mixed-approach programs*, providing center-based services to some families, home-based services to other families, or a mixture of center-based and home-based services

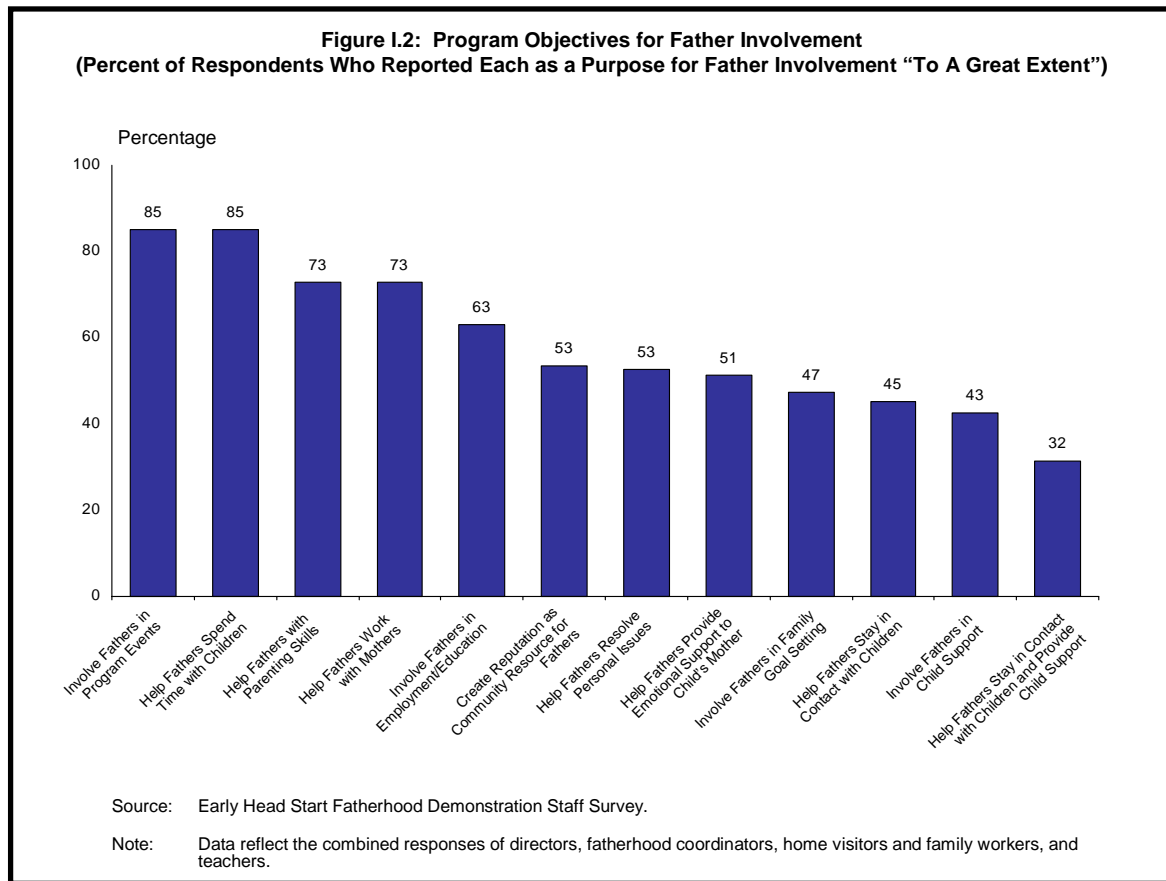
Of the 21 grantees, 6 operate center-based programs, 2 operate home-based programs, and 13 operate mixed-approach programs. Compared to the study of Raikes et al. (2002), which included information on 261 Early Head Start programs, the fatherhood demonstration grantees included far fewer programs that offered a home-based approach (10 percent versus 37 percent) and far more programs with a mixed service delivery approach (62 percent versus 36 percent).

Nineteen of the programs reported that a large majority of the families they served came from a single racial or ethnic background (not shown in table). In particular, 8 of the 21 programs served mostly Hispanic families; 7 programs served predominantly African American families; 3 programs reported serving a majority of white families; and 1 program included almost exclusively American Indian families. The rest of the

programs served a mixed population with no single racial or ethnic majority. By comparison, Raikes et al. (2002) reported that more than 44 percent of Early Head Start programs surveyed nationwide served predominantly white families, compared to less than 10 percent of the demonstration programs.

Prior to the demonstration, few grantees had formal experience serving fathers. Only six had participated in formal initiatives aimed at helping fathers in Head Start or Early Head Start become more involved in their children's lives. Most of the other programs described informal experiences involving fathers through special events and in regular program activities. Despite their lack of experience providing targeted services to fathers, all of the grantees understood the importance of engaging fathers and believed that the Early Head Start Fatherhood Demonstration was a welcome opportunity to try new strategies for enhancing the lives of the families they serve.

As they began work on the demonstration, most programs formulated general goals for their work with fathers. Through the survey, grantee staff were asked to identify their program purposes for father involvement (Figure I.2). The largest proportion of staff reported that getting fathers involved in program events and encouraging them to spend time with their children were major objectives for their work with fathers. These overarching goals and objectives motivated the structure of services supported by the demonstration grants.



Who Are the Children Served by the Demonstration Programs?

The demonstration programs identified a total of 1,871 children enrolled in Early Head Start at the time of the second round of site visits. Table I.2 provides an overview of the key characteristics of the children by service delivery area. The children's average age was slightly less than 2 years, with children in home-based programs being on the average about 3 months younger. The programs served about an equal percentage of male and female children. At the time of the data collection, the average length of time that a child had been in the program was slightly less than 12 months. However, children who were participating in center-based programs had a shorter length of stay than children who were in a mixed-approach or home-based program (not shown in table).

The children came from a range of racial and ethnic backgrounds, with the largest group (approximately 43 percent) being of Hispanic decent. Approximately 29 percent lived in rural service delivery areas, 31 percent in urban areas, and 41 percent in mixed urban and rural areas. More than 80 percent of the children in rural areas were either of white or Hispanic decent. By contrast, more than half of urban children were African American, and more than half of children in mixed service delivery areas were of Hispanic origin.

Table I.2: Characteristics of the Children Served by the Demonstration Programs, by Service Delivery Area (Percentage of Children)

	All Children	Service Delivery Area		
		Rural	Urban	Mixed Urban and Rural
Had Father or Father Figure Involved in His or Her Life	79.1	82.0	71.5	82.4*
Gender				
Female	48.2	46.5	48.8	49.3
Male	51.8	53.5	51.2	50.7
Average Age in Months	23.5	20.5	23.5	23.8
Race/Ethnicity				
White, non-Hispanic	21.4	38.5	3.6	20.3*
African American, non-Hispanic	25.3	9.7	54.6	17.1
American Indian, non-Hispanic	4.8	8.3	0.2	5.4
Hispanic	44.5	41.2	36.5	52.1
Other	4.3	2.4	5.1	5.1
Average Stay in the Program in Months	11.3	11.0	11.0	11.8
Sample Size	1,871	540	571	760

Source: Early Head Start Fatherhood Demonstration Father/Father Figure Information Forms.

*The difference between subgroups is significant at the 0.5 level, two-tailed test.

What Role Do Fathers Play in These Children's Lives?

For each child enrolled in Early Head Start, program staff provided information on whether the biological father or a father figure was involved in the child's life. The demonstration programs adopted a broad definition of "father figure"—attempting to include a wide range of men, such as grandfathers or uncles, who serve as an important role model in the child's life. MPR received information about father involvement for 1,743 of the children, or 93 percent of the total sample. Of these children, program staff reported that 79 percent had at least one father or father figure who was currently involved in their lives (Table I.2). Only a small proportion (3 percent) of children had two or more fathers or father figures reported.

This level of father involvement was somewhat lower than the levels reported by the Early Head Start Research and Evaluation Project (ACF 2002). In the national study, mothers of children attending Early Head Start programs reported that nearly 90 percent of the children had either a biological father or a father figure in their lives. Similarly, the Fragile Family Study (McLanahan et al. 2003) reported only 9 percent of the fathers having little or no contact with the mothers near the time of the child's birth. Since our study relied on reporting by program staff, it is possible that Early Head Start staff were not always aware of the involvement of a father in the child's life. Supporting this hypothesis, programs reported more fathers involved in the children's lives for older children, as well as for children who had been in the program longer. Programs identified about the same number of fathers for children who had entered the program before the start of the demonstration versus children who had entered the program after the demonstration started.

Table I.3 provides information on the characteristics of the fathers and father figures involved in the lives of the children served by the demonstration programs. Of the fathers identified by program staff, nearly 84 percent were the biological father of an enrolled child, while 16 percent were father figures. About 40 percent of all identified men were married to the child's mother, which is similar to the percentage of mothers reported to be married in the Early Head Start Research and Evaluation Project (ACF 2002).

More than 70 percent of fathers lived with their children; however, children served by urban programs were less likely than those in rural or mixed-setting programs to have a father and father figure living in the home. Further, these fathers and father figures were less likely to be married to the mother of the child (not shown in Table I.3). These results suggest the likelihood that programs serving urban areas encountered special challenges in trying to get fathers and father figures involved in Early Head Start.

**Table I.3 : Characteristics of the Fathers/Father Figures Involved in the Children's Lives
(Percentage of Fathers)**

	All Fathers	Type of Father		Living with Child		Married to Child's Mother	
		Biological	Father Figure	Yes	No	Yes	No
Type of Father							
Biological	84.3	100.0	0.0*	85.8	79.7*	95.4	75.9*
Father figure	15.7	0.0	100.0	14.2	20.3	4.6	24.1
Living with Child	71.2	73.6	64.4*	100.0	0.0*	93.2	55.5*
Married to Child's Mother	40.9	47.3	12.1*	54.1	9.7*	100.0	0.0*
Service Delivery Area of Program Where Child is Enrolled							
Rural	28.3	28.7	32.5*	31.6	28.1*	30.9	30.6*
Urban	30.3	28.0	17.5	22.5	34.5	22.0	27.8
Mixed urban and rural	41.4	43.4	50.0	45.9	37.4	47.0	41.5
Participated in Early Head Start in Past 6 Months	70.6	71.2	66.7	76.7	57.6*	77.2	67.5*
Race/Ethnicity ^a							
White, non-Hispanic	22.7	21.5	31.6*	25.3	15.1*	28.1	19.3*
African American, non-Hispanic	24.1	22.9	24.7	16.7	39.9	13.1	31.6
American Indian, non-Hispanic	3.8	3.9	3.8	4.5	2.2	3.6	4.0
Hispanic	46.8	48.7	38.6	50.6	41.2	51.2	43.4
Other, non-Hispanic	2.6	3.0	1.3	2.9	1.6	4.0	1.6
Sample Size	1,433	1,141	212	952	385	540	780

Source: Early Head Start Fatherhood Demonstration Father/Father Figure Information Forms.

* The difference between subgroups is significant at the .05 level, two-tailed test.

^aData pertain only to those fathers and father figures who participated in Early Head Start within the past 6 months.

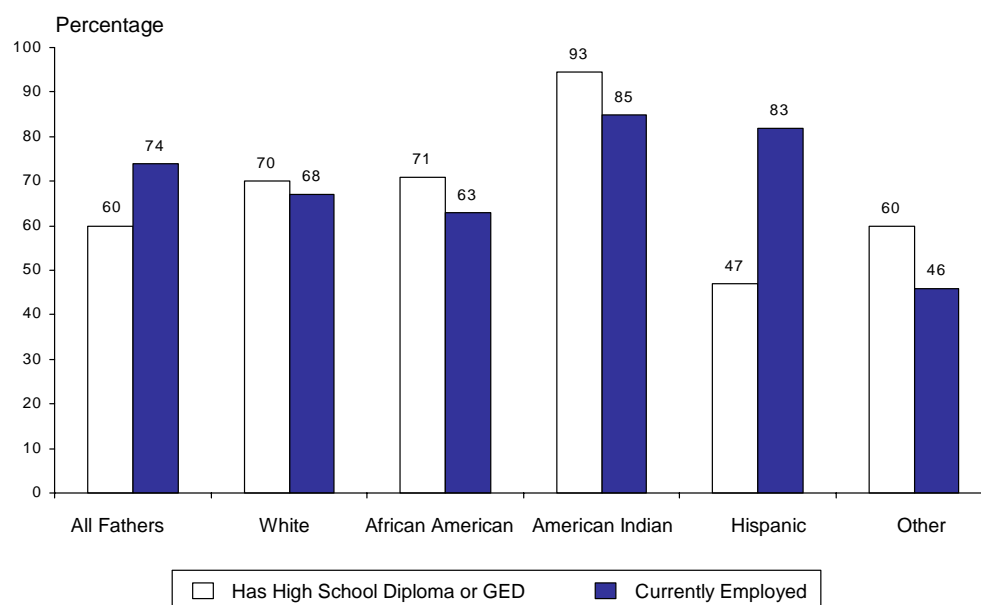
In general, many fathers engaged in at least some program activities. Staff reported that about 71 percent of the fathers and father figures involved in their children's lives had participated in at least one Early Head Start activity in the past six months. Compared to men who were involved with their children but did not participate in Early Head Start, fathers and father figures who engaged in the program were far more likely to be living with the child and to be married to the child's mother. Participating biological fathers were 30 years old, on average; fewer than 8 percent were younger than age 21. Participating father figures were slightly older with an average age of 36 years.

Of all fathers and father figures engaged in the program, approximately 60 percent had completed high school or received a general equivalency degree (GED), and almost 75 percent were employed (Figure I.3). Although the level of education was lowest among

participating Hispanic fathers and father figures, these men were much more likely to be employed than fathers of other racial and ethnic backgrounds. Educational achievement was the highest among American Indian fathers, who also had the highest level of current employment. More than half of fathers who did not work received medical assistance (68 percent) and food stamps (59 percent).

According to staff reports, most fathers were very satisfied (76 percent) or somewhat satisfied (18 percent) with the usual amount of time they spent with their children (Figure I.4). However, staff reported that only 46 percent of nonresident biological fathers were very satisfied. In fact, more than 22 percent of nonresident biological fathers were somewhat or very dissatisfied with the time they were able to spend with their children. To expand on this, staff members were asked to identify the barriers that fathers faced in being involved with their children. Compared to 16 percent of fathers overall, 46 percent of nonresident biological fathers faced at least one barrier to involvement. Among the most common barriers that these fathers faced were custody issues (16 percent), work schedules (11 percent), domestic violence or problems with anger (9 percent), alcohol or drug use (7 percent), and incarceration (6 percent). The demonstration programs attempted to address these barriers in a variety of ways. Throughout the remainder of this report, we discuss the range of strategies that programs have employed to help fathers become more involved in the Early Head Start program and, in turn, in the lives of their children.

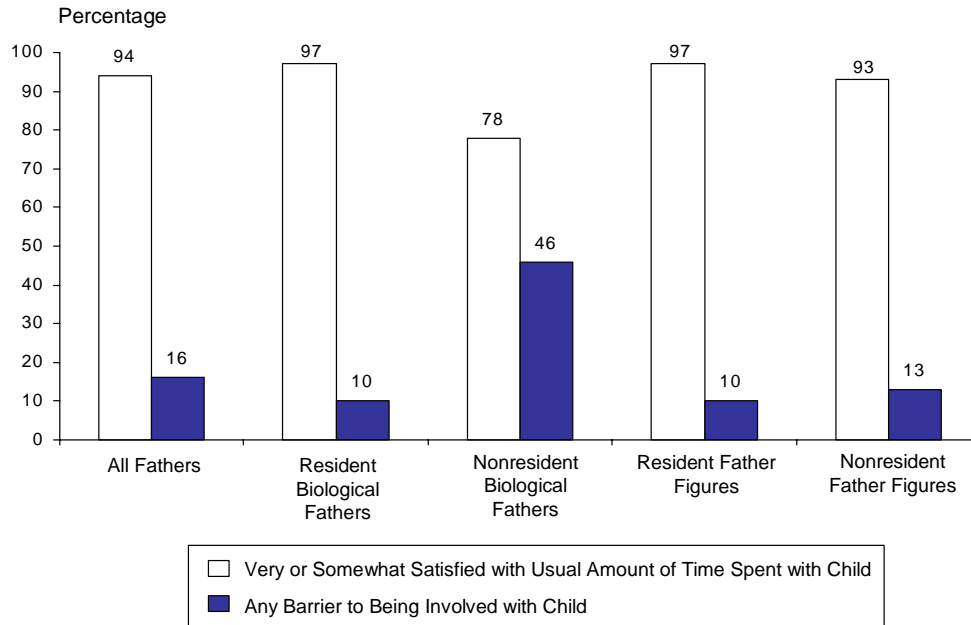
Figure I.3: Education and Employment of Participating Fathers, by Race/Ethnicity (Percentage of Fathers)



Source: Early Head Start Fatherhood Demonstration Father/Father Figure Information Forms.

Note: Data pertain only to those fathers and father figures who participated in Early Head Start within the past 6 months.

**Figure I.4: Fathers' Satisfaction with and Barriers to Involvement with Their Children
(Percentage of Fathers)**



Source: Early Head Start Fatherhood Demonstration Father/Father Figure Information Forms.

Note: Data pertain only to those fathers and father-figures who participated in Early Head Start within the past six months.

CHAPTER II

WHAT STAFFING STRUCTURES FACILITATE WORK WITH FATHERS?

Many of the demonstration programs launched their father involvement initiatives by creating new fatherhood staff positions and hiring people to fill them. The second year of the demonstration saw fatherhood staff at some programs solidifying their roles and expanding the scope of their work. In other programs, fatherhood staff encountered impediments to fulfilling their responsibilities and linking their activities with other Early Head Start services. A number of programs experienced turnover among fatherhood program staff, sometimes resulting in significant setbacks in their efforts to involve men. This chapter considers how programs have approached staffing for the fatherhood demonstration, including the roles and responsibilities programs have established for fatherhood staff members, their strategies for hiring staff members and handling turnover, and their methods for integrating fatherhood staff into the larger Early Head Start program.

ESTABLISHING A STRUCTURE FOR FATHERHOOD STAFF

Responsibilities associated with creating a new fatherhood initiative included program development, management and supervision, and direct service provision to fathers. Programs reported that a staff structure that sensibly allocated this array of responsibilities and tasks helped some demonstration programs continue to develop their initiatives and engage fathers more effectively. Several of the grantees developed unique staffing strategies that included staff at various levels, including fatherhood coordinators, fatherhood specialists, and father mentors.

Several Staffing Structures Emerged Over Time to Accommodate the Range of Responsibilities for Work with Fathers

By the end of their second year of implementation, several staffing structures had emerged within the demonstration programs. Approximately two-thirds of the programs adopted a “coordinator-specialist” staff structure that featured a fatherhood coordinator and one or more specialists; only 10 programs used this model in the first year of implementation (Bellotti 2002). Several programs hired new staff whose time was split between the fatherhood coordinator position and other roles within the agency or program. A few programs chose not to create new positions for their fatherhood initiatives, instead dividing responsibilities among existing Early Head Start staff members. Finally, one program hired one fatherhood specialist for each of its Early Head Start locations.

Within each model, fatherhood staff generally assumed three types of responsibilities, each encompassing several tasks:

1. ***Program development.*** Establishing goals for the fatherhood demonstration, defining program services or activities, and creating implementation plans. Refining strategies for increasing father involvement and tailoring activities and services to the changing interests and needs of fathers
2. ***Program management and administration.*** Monitoring progress toward program goals, managing the program budget, supervising staff, and maintaining a database of father information. Conducting internal staff training and pursuing collaborations with community groups and other agencies
3. ***Direct service provision.*** Providing case management, home visits, and other formal and informal contacts with fathers. Conducting outreach and recruitment of men. Also facilitating fatherhood program activities such as men’s group and father-child activities

The programs that adopted the coordinator-specialist model typically allocated responsibility for program development and administration to the fatherhood coordinator, which allowed specialists to focus more heavily on direct service provision. In most cases, fatherhood coordinators worked full time, while specialists were employed either part time or full time. The coordinator-specialist structure seems to have facilitated both direct engagement with men and ongoing efforts to refine program goals and strategies as fatherhood programs mature. The degree of specialization among fatherhood staff was sometimes more limited in practice—for example, staff members often shared responsibilities for organizing and leading father activities. Nevertheless, as one fatherhood coordinator noted, having a capable specialist available to devote substantial time to working directly with fathers allows coordinators to assume more planning and administrative duties, including developing partnerships with outside organizations and creating a longer-term plan for the fatherhood program.

The other models for staffing fatherhood initiatives were less costly, although the experience of the demonstration programs suggests that these alternatives could have

drawbacks. Under the right conditions, staff reported, these approaches functioned reasonably well. However, programs that decided not to create new positions for their fatherhood initiatives, or that hired new staff whose time was split between fatherhood work and other responsibilities, did not always appear to have enough staff capacity to accommodate the substantial demands of running a fatherhood program and reaching out to fathers effectively. Despite the fact that staff who had fatherhood responsibilities as only one part of their jobs were hardworking professionals, other tasks did sometimes divert their attention from promoting father involvement. In at least two programs where fatherhood staff “wore two hats,” staff noted that pressing issues related to other responsibilities sometimes made it difficult for them to devote adequate time to working with fathers and managing the fatherhood program.

Seven programs altered staff structures or increased the number of fatherhood staff during the demonstration’s second year, in an effort to tailor their fatherhood initiatives to specific program contexts or to respond to increases in family enrollment or overall workload. Two programs with fatherhood coordinators added specialists to their staffs after the number of men participating in the program had increased substantially. One program changed its staff organization to intensify father outreach at each of its six centers. The new structure—which eliminated the position of fatherhood coordinator and expanded the number of specialists from one to six—allowed specialists to make greater personal contact with fathers while also organizing activities that met the particular needs of men at each center. Despite several positive implications of this change, the absence of a coordinator appeared to be a weakness of the new structure. Staff members noted that it was unclear under the new model who had overall responsibility for the fatherhood program’s operation and development.

One-Quarter of Programs Hired Formal Father Mentors to Aid Fatherhood Staff

Several programs supplemented the efforts of fatherhood staff by engaging fathers as mentors for other participating fathers. About one-quarter of the demonstration programs had a formal mentoring component. Fathers who acted as mentors helped program staff by organizing and taking part in scheduled activities, recruiting other men into the program and getting to know the interests, talents, and needs of fellow participants. Most programs with father mentors asked men to volunteer for this role, but two programs paid fathers for taking on the additional responsibilities. To help fathers prepare for their work as mentors, one program arranged for them to receive formal training from a local chapter of Big Brothers/Big Sisters.

HIRING FATHERHOOD STAFF

Given that most programs were hiring fatherhood staff for the first time during this demonstration, many were unsure of the qualifications needed to do the job well. They eventually discovered that, to engage fathers effectively, fatherhood staff needed academic and education qualifications paired with strong personal character. Many of the programs

found it difficult to find people with these qualifications and thus began to customize their hiring practices to identify and narrowly target the field of appropriate job candidates.

Programs Identified the Importance of Both Educational Qualifications and Personal Character When Hiring Fatherhood Staff

A second year of reaching out to Early Head Start fathers helped programs pinpoint some of the staff skills and qualifications needed to do this work well. The educational and professional backgrounds of fatherhood staff varied across demonstration programs, but training in social work or experience in community organizing and development were two attributes frequently found. According to one Early Head Start director, being a social worker is not enough for fatherhood staff; staff members should also be able to “break through” to fathers on a personal level and to offer them practical assistance in achieving such goals as getting a job. Comments from Early Head Start managers and other staff members suggest that fatherhood staff were most effective when they had a blend of solid educational credentials and certain personal and professional abilities, including:

- ***Charisma.*** Staff members who connected with fathers on a personal level, whose company fathers enjoyed and whom fathers respected, were more likely to engage fathers’ interest and build a relationship that encouraged and sustained their participation in Early Head Start activities. A charismatic fatherhood coordinator or specialist could also be important in efforts to encourage all Early Head Start staff to reach out to fathers and appreciate the importance of male involvement for the families they serve. Some programs found that individuals with experience working in faith-based organizations brought this kind of energy to their fatherhood initiatives.
- ***Familiarity with the community.*** Fatherhood staff familiar with the communities they served offered a distinct advantage to their programs. They were able to better target their fatherhood activities to the interests and concerns of men in a particular ethnic or racial group. Staff connections to the community also appeared to benefit participating fathers—for example, by linking those who were looking for jobs with local employers or workforce development organizations. Community expertise facilitated collaborations with other organizations that had contact with fathers or that could provide financial or in-kind support for the fatherhood program.
- ***Experience with program administration.*** Fatherhood staff often managed other employees, set up and tracked program budgets, and handled a host of other administrative tasks. Staff with prior experience of this kind were valuable for helping fatherhood programs quickly get up and running, operate efficiently, and expand over time.

Many programs reported that fatherhood staff who were fathers themselves were more effective in reaching and connecting with Early Head Start fathers. Both male and female

staff members interacted frequently with fathers in the demonstration programs, although many staff and Early Head Start fathers found it advantageous to have male staff for the fatherhood program. Fathers frequently responded more readily to recruitment efforts from male staff and appreciated the opportunity to turn to a male with expertise in parenting. As one focus group participant commented, “I feel more comfortable talking with someone I know, and someone I know as a *father*.” Given this kind of reaction among fathers, it was not surprising that the director of one program whose fatherhood initiative was supervised by a female staff member came to the conclusion that having males operate the fatherhood program was important for engaging men over the long term.

Hiring men for a fatherhood initiative or other Early Head Start roles addressed cultural norms in some programs that affected whether fathers felt comfortable working with Early Head Start staff. One program serving predominantly Hispanic families reported that fathers sometimes worried about their wives or girlfriends becoming jealous if they discussed personal issues with a female staff member. Having male fatherhood staff helped alleviate this concern. However, fathers did not seem to feel that it mattered whether other staff members, including teachers and family workers, were male or female. More important, they said, was whether the staff member cared for their children well.

Difficulty Hiring Qualified Fatherhood Staff Hindered Progress in Many Programs

Some EHS managers noted that it was especially difficult to identify and hire job candidates with the right mix of qualifications for working with fathers. In a few programs, these recruiting challenges resulted in long periods with no dedicated staff for the fatherhood project. To some extent, the obstacles programs faced in recruiting fatherhood staff were similar to those for other Early Head Start positions—relatively low pay, for example. Other obstacles were specific to the kinds of staff programs hoped to hire for their fatherhood initiatives. For instance, the absence of a strong professional network



STRATEGIES FOR RECRUITING MALE STAFF



To overcome barriers to hiring male staff, some programs focused staff recruitment efforts on professionals in related fields, or made use of an Early Head Start program's existing connections with men. For instance, the PAPI project at New York Founding (Hato Ray, PR) publicized job opportunities in the fatherhood program at a local school of social work. Family Star (Denver, CO) identified a father coordinator by looking for people who had been affiliated with the organization as board members or volunteers.

In advertising fatherhood staff positions, Youth and Family Services (Rapid City, SD) found it helpful to style the language and imagery in its announcements so that they appealed to a broad range of people, including those not already involved in early childhood education. When recruiting staff for the fatherhood initiative, the Early Head Start director removed the illustrated border, featuring teddy bears, that usually appeared in Early Head Start employment postings. It was the director's hope that the change would increase the chances that men would read the newspaper advertisement, rather than instinctively skip it. The fatherhood coordinator hired by the program learned about the opportunity through this advertisement.

among men in the field of early childhood education meant that word-of-mouth about job opportunities in Early Head Start programs did not reach them easily.

Some programs felt that Early Head Start fathers themselves would be strong candidates for fatherhood staff positions. At least three programs hired fathers as specialists in the second year of the demonstration. These programs made a deliberate effort to seek out job candidates among men participating in the fatherhood initiative, believing that these fathers would know their communities and the Early Head Start program well, that they would be able to relate easily with other fathers in the program, and thus serve as role models for them. Fatherhood coordinators and other staff in these programs noted that the presence of fathers on staff sent a strong signal of inclusiveness to other men and improved the effectiveness of their fatherhood programs. As with the hiring process for other staff members, however, programs were hard-pressed to find fathers who were well qualified for available positions. Depending on the previous work experience of fathers who were hired, some supervisors found it necessary to mentor them professionally, in order to ease their transition into a staff role and the Early Head Start work environment. Programs interested in hiring fathers and keeping them on staff occasionally encountered major barriers to doing so. For example, one program discovered that numerous interested fathers had criminal histories that prevented them from working legally in early childhood settings. Another father who was hired for an Early Head Start position had a high rate of absenteeism. These challenges notwithstanding, one coordinator cited the hiring of a father as his program's most important accomplishment during its second year.



HIRING FATHERHOOD STAFF WITH CULTURAL KNOWLEDGE



The Red Cliff Early Head Start Program (Bayfield, WI) serves the children of the Red Cliff Band of the Lake Superior Chippewa nation and other children living within 10 miles of the nation. The program hired as fatherhood coordinator a tribal member who is well known and respected within the local community and highly knowledgeable of the Ojibwe culture. He has used his knowledge in the Ojibwe culture to engage fathers in the program. For example, he has held periodic workshops on the Ojibwe perspective of human development, which are extremely popular among participating fathers, and has held talking circles, which give fathers an opportunity to exchange ideas on issues that are of concern to them. The fatherhood coordinator has also infused his knowledge of the Ojibwe culture into the program's child development curriculum to make it more relevant for program families.

ADDRESSING STAFF TURNOVER

Turnover among fatherhood staff was a frequent and consequential challenge for programs during the second year of the demonstration. More than half of the demonstration programs lost one or more members of their fatherhood staff. Although many factors may have motivated these departures, information gathered during the site

visits suggests that more attractive job opportunities in other organizations and relatively low salaries were common reasons.

The departure of fatherhood staff typically slowed or halted programs' progress toward increasing father involvement, with loss of a fatherhood coordinator especially detrimental. Without leadership for their initiatives, programs reported that fatherhood activities came to a standstill, sometimes for months. These hiatuses were often due largely to the difficulty of hiring replacements for fatherhood staff. As a stopgap measure, one program whose coordinator resigned chose to contract with an outside consultant to keep fatherhood activities going until a new staff member was hired. Another program chose not to replace departing fatherhood staff at all, given the relatively short duration of demonstration funding.

Turnover among fatherhood staff sometimes undermined the trust and credibility built among fathers and program staff members. Fathers in one program felt as though they had been "tossed aside" when the fatherhood coordinator left and no replacement was hired for several months. The Early Head Start director in another program expressed the opinion that the coordinator's departure set a bad example for fathers and confirmed the negative stereotype of other female staff members that men were unreliable.

Programs that seemed to weather staff turnover with less difficulty had some advance notice of the change or hired replacements for departing staff from inside the organization. New staff members who were already familiar with the Early Head Start program and its fatherhood component—including Early Head Start fathers hired as staff members—were expected to "get up to speed" more quickly than a newcomer. As noted earlier, two programs hired fathers to fill the positions of departing specialists. No programs had promoted specialists to fill a vacant coordinator position, however. Several programs believed that replacing a coordinator through internal hiring would require devoting sufficient time and effort to professional development of junior staff members before turnover occurred. Because turnover occurred so frequently, programs would likely benefit from offering this kind of support for current staff.

How well programs handled turnover among fatherhood staff was also influenced by the extent of other staff members' commitment to father involvement. Where family workers, teachers, and other staff members actively supported father involvement, a change in fatherhood staff was less likely to cause a major disruption in efforts to engage men in Early Head Start activities and services. This commitment was developed through effective staff training in the importance of father involvement and strategies for engaging men. It was cultivated as well by engaging all staff members in working with fathers and making men feel welcome in Early Head Start settings. Family workers and teachers who had substantial direct contact with fathers and were well informed about the circumstances of individual fathers were better prepared to continue serving them in the event that fatherhood staff members left the program.

In one instance, turnover among fatherhood staff appeared to have benefited a program's father involvement efforts. This program turned the resignation of a fatherhood specialist to its advantage by hiring a replacement better suited for the position. The new hire was able to relate to fathers and other Early Head Start staff more easily than his predecessor and was seen as a welcome addition to the fatherhood staff.



WEATHERING TURNOVER AMONG FATHERHOOD STAFF



During the second year of the demonstration, the fatherhood initiative at Educational Alliance (New York, NY) experienced turnover among all three fatherhood staff positions simultaneously. To help weather this disruption, caseworkers took over responsibility for working with the fathers of children in their caseloads. One father commented during the focus group that the transition from working with a male father coordinator to a female caseworker was relatively seamless. He remarked: "[My child's caseworker] is great...she's been with my daughter since she was young. She's been a great help to me." At the time of the site visit, he was seeking custody of his daughter through the family court system. Through his association with the father coordinator, teachers, and caseworkers at Educational Alliance, the father became comfortable seeking information from agencies, sought education services and job skills training, and has been able to talk with others about the stresses of being a parent. After feeling overwhelmed by his circumstances for a long time, he finally began to feel confident about the future. He said the key to his renewed confidence was "doing it himself" with the help of the resources available at Early Head Start.

INTEGRATING FATHERHOOD STAFF INTO THE EARLY HEAD START PROGRAM

The experience of the demonstration programs indicates that, for a program to work effectively with fathers, it mattered not only how the roles and responsibilities of fatherhood staff were defined, but also how well fatherhood staff members were integrated into the overall Early Head Start program. Although having dedicated staff for a fatherhood initiative seemed to promote father involvement, some Early Head Start staff members noted that it was easy to compartmentalize fatherhood staff, which impeded the initiative's development and the Early Head Start program's ability to meet the needs of both fathers and families. Creating links between fatherhood staff and other staff units helped programs avoid this outcome, as did a clear message from Early Head Start directors of support for and confidence in father involvement efforts.

Frequent Communication Among Fatherhood and Other Early Head Start Staff Was Important for Involving Fathers in All Early Head Start Services

Some programs fostered connections between fatherhood staff and other Early Head Start workers by placing them in the same organizational unit, usually a staff group focusing on family development. This structure kept open the lines of communication between fatherhood staff and their colleagues, so that information about Early Head Start family members could be shared and services easily coordinated. In one program where these links

were not firmly established, fatherhood staff were not regularly involved in family enrollments until the Early Head Start director intervened and began monitoring his inclusion in those meetings.

In many programs, an “open door policy” among fatherhood staff members furthered collaboration with colleagues. Some fatherhood coordinators and specialists found it helpful to take the initiative in offering assistance to home visitors or teachers who interacted with fathers regularly. Once staff members discovered that this assistance was available and valuable, they were more likely to view the fatherhood staff as a resource and turn to them naturally whenever issues or questions arose regarding the fathers they served.

Fatherhood Staff Believed That Early Head Start Leaders Needed to Communicate Ongoing Support for the Fatherhood Initiative

Many Early Head Start leaders helped create an environment that promoted the work of fatherhood staff by clearly expressing their support for the initiative. Program managers demonstrated support for fatherhood initiatives not only by telling staff that father involvement was important, but also by structuring their organizations to facilitate and prioritize the work of fatherhood staff. In one program, for example, the fatherhood coordinator functioned at the same organizational level as the Early Head Start director, with both positions reporting to the program’s executive director. Placing the coordinator at this level sent a clear message to staff—and families—that father involvement was a priority for the Early Head Start program.

In addition, Early Head Start leaders who offered fatherhood staff members a measure of independence in their efforts to engage fathers communicated confidence in their work and thus, according to fatherhood staff, facilitated the initiative’s progress. Leaders needed to strike a balance in this regard, of course, continuing to provide oversight for program operations. Disproportionate control from the top sometimes curbed creativity and motivation among staff. For instance, a fatherhood coordinator from one program expressed frustration that he had little control over the project budget and, for this reason, found it difficult to organize activities. Some programs that provided fatherhood staff greater leeway discovered that their efforts at father involvement flourished as a result, with staff members able to respond quickly with activities and services as new ideas, interests, and needs emerged among fathers and staff members.

CHAPTER III

HOW HAVE PROGRAMS CREATED “FATHER-FRIENDLY” ENVIRONMENTS?

The demonstration programs viewed “father-friendliness” as an important factor in their success in engaging fathers in Early Head Start services. Father-friendliness can be broadly defined as the extent to which the Early Head Start program and staff convey a welcoming message to fathers and offer services that meet fathers’ needs. This chapter describes programs’ efforts to become father-friendly and the strategies that program staff rated as most successful. We also identify the barriers programs continue to face in becoming father-friendly. Finally, we explore how the demonstration programs ranked their “stage of father-friendliness” and compare these findings with those from the Ford Foundation’s Early Head Start practitioners study (Raikes et al. 2002).

COMMON STRATEGIES FOR BECOMING FATHER-FRIENDLY

Programs actively adopted multiple strategies to become father-friendly. Through site visit interviews and survey responses, program staff provided rich information about the types of strategies adopted to make their Early Head Start programs more welcoming to fathers and their perceptions of the success of these efforts. The staff survey presented a list of strategies that programs might employ to become more friendly and engaging toward fathers. The strategies can be grouped roughly into six general categories: (1) staff training, (2) personal staff attention and communication, (3) presence of male staff, (4) service offerings and referrals, (5) changes to program culture, and (6) physical program environment (Table III.1). Respondents were asked to first identify the practices that their programs had adopted, then rank the two strategies that were most successful in helping to involve fathers. Across positions, program staff members were in general agreement about the effectiveness of specific strategies.

Table III.1: Strategies for Becoming Father-Friendly

Strategy	Percentage of Respondents Reporting that the Program Adopted this Strategy	Percentage of Respondents Reporting that this Strategy Was the First or Second Most Successful
Staff Training		
Provided specific training for father-involvement specialist	85.5	5.3
Provided training for all staff working with men/fathers	82.9	23.7
Enabled front line staff to become open to working with fathers	85.5	9.2
Personal Staff Attention and Communication		
Invited fathers to participate in all aspects of Early Head Start	94.7	23.7
Interacted with fathers accompanying mothers	93.4	13.2
Recruited fathers to mentor, recruit, or facilitate groups	55.3	9.2
Ensured that all mailings included fathers' names	60.5	6.6
Sent written information to nonresident fathers	47.4	2.6
Presence of Male Staff		
Hired male staff	85.5	11.8
Involved male staff in the recruitment of fathers	88.2	9.2
Service Offerings and Referrals		
Completed needs assessments for fathers	54.0	4.0
Referred fathers for services at other agencies when necessary	88.2	0.0
Developed a relationship with local OCSE	77.6	4.0
Provided bilingual activities for non-English-speaking fathers	47.4	5.3
Changes to Program Culture		
Created an image that the program is designed for fathers too	80.3	4.0
Developed expectation that fathers should and will participate	57.9	5.3
Included service to fathers in staff performance appraisals	25.0	0.0
Ensured that enrollment forms record father information	86.8	7.9
Obtained fathers' contact information, regardless of residency	84.2	5.3
Integrated fatherhood staff into the overall program	80.3	9.2
Allowed staff time and resources to recruit fathers	68.4	0.0
Scheduled home visits/meetings with fathers' schedule in mind	86.8	6.6
Encouraged mothers to work cooperatively with fathers	85.5	5.3
Physical Program Environment		
Planned a program/center environment that is father friendly	89.5	4.0
Displayed positive images of men on walls and in brochures	82.9	7.9
Provided a room or space for men at the program facilities	32.9	1.3
Sample size	76	76

Source: Early Head Start Fatherhood Demonstration Staff Surveys.

Note: Data reflect the combined responses of directors, fatherhood coordinators, home visitors/family workers, and teachers.

Staff Training Was Reported as the Most Successful Strategy to Becoming Father-Friendly

Any program is only as good as the staff members who run it; therefore, training has always been an important component of Early Head Start. Site visit interviews revealed that staff view training as instrumental to the success of their fatherhood initiatives. Supporting this finding, most respondents to the staff survey, regardless of job title, cited training as the most successful strategy that their programs had adopted for becoming father-friendly. Most respondents reported that their programs had provided training specifically for the fatherhood staff (86 percent), as well as the rest of the Early Head Start staff (83 percent).

In their content, these training sessions often focused on addressing staff attitudes toward involving men in the program. As was discovered during the first round of site visits, many female staff members had negative personal experiences with their own fathers or the fathers of their children. For some, these experiences continued to color their attitudes toward engaging program fathers. According to reports from fatherhood staff and program directors, internal staff training sessions often were successful in making staff more receptive to including men. However, in many cases, they noted that staff reservations about working with men were deeply ingrained, which suggested that ongoing training was needed to reinforce the importance of male involvement and to maintain the support of female staff. Programs adopted a variety of curricula for their training; frequently, they used exercises from a fatherhood curriculum developed by the National Center for Strategic Nonprofit Planning and Community Leadership (NPCL) or a model developed by Jerry Tello.^{1,2}

¹ NPCL is a nonprofit organization created for charitable and educational purposes. Its mission is to improve the governance and administration of nonprofit, tax-exempt organizations and to strengthen community leadership through family and neighborhood empowerment. For more information on NPCL or its fatherhood curriculum, visit <http://www.npcl.org>

² Jerry Tello has written on the topic of family strengthening and cross-cultural issues. He is the author of several curricula, including *Male Rites of Passage*, *Pregnancy/Violence Prevention*, and *Multicultural Young Fatherhood*.



HELPING FEMALE STAFF BECOME COMFORTABLE WORKING WITH FATHERS



Ventura County Child Development Services (Oxnard, CA) and Sacramento Employment and Training Agency (Sacramento, CA) used one of Jerry Tello's staff development curricula as well as hiring him to facilitate several staff trainings. Staff found these trainings and curriculum helpful. The theme of the training was to focus staff (who were primarily female) on how experiences with the men in their own lives, either their fathers or the fathers of their children, had influenced their attitudes toward and willingness to work with the fathers of the families they serve. The female staff in Ventura County were unanimous in their praise of the training and several became emotional in recounting how they recognized that they were previously reluctant to work with fathers and were now much more open to the idea. One female staff member tearfully stated that her negative experiences with her own father had led her to feel unsafe around fathers in the families she served, but that recognition of this fear had led to its abatement. Several other female staff agreed that as a result of the training they had made strides in including men. Some indicated that they made a point of learning the fathers' names, that they felt less unsafe being around them, and that they became more attuned to their attitudes toward men in their personal as well as professional lives.

Providing Fathers with Personal Staff Attention Appeared Very Successful in Making Men Feel Welcome at Early Head Start

Staff reported that providing fathers with personal staff attention was another very important strategy for encouraging father participation. Personal staff attention included, for instance: inviting fathers to program events, interacting with fathers who accompany mothers to events, and recruiting fathers to mentor other fathers. Directors, home visitors, and teaching staff agreed that simply inviting men to participate in program events was one of the most successful strategies their programs had adopted. Further, the specific strategy of inviting men to participate in program events was the most frequently endorsed strategy overall, with nearly 95 percent of all respondents indicating that their program did so. A similar proportion of staff indicated that they interacted with men who accompanied mothers to events, but who "hung in the background" without interacting themselves.

Many staff indicated during site visit interviews that they had actively attempted to engage fathers one-on-one and that these interactions seemed to have been effective in increasing participation among the men. Staff gave many examples of how they try to make fathers feel welcome, including learning fathers' names and greeting them by name, extending personal invitations to events (either by mail or in person), engaging the fathers in short conversations while they drop off or pick up their children, and inviting men into the classroom to help with a task or to work with their child. In some of the father focus groups, men stated that personal invitations to events, as well as warm and friendly relationships or interactions with a teacher or staff member, were instrumental to their participation in the program.

Staff reported that clear, ongoing communication between staff members and families, including fathers, was also critical for meaningful change to occur. Programs wanting to involve fathers had to make that desire clear and communicate with fathers and families about ongoing activities, as well as special meetings and events. These formal communications, however, were less common and less likely to be noted as successful. The specific formal communication strategies identified in the staff survey were whether programs mailed materials that included the fathers' names (61 percent) and whether they mailed sets of materials to nonresident fathers that were similar to those sent to mothers (47 percent). Several staff in the site visits indicated that mailings were an ineffective way to engage men in activities, although mailings may have been a typical method used to invite men to events. Instead, some staff members had adopted other small ways of signaling to fathers that they were interested in including them in the program. When calling a family at home, for example, several staff members reported that, rather than immediately asking for the mother if the father answered the phone, they spent a few minutes talking to the father about the child.

More than half of respondents reported that their programs recruited fathers who completed the fatherhood program or men from the community to mentor other fathers. As discussed in Chapter II, however, site visits revealed that only one-quarter of programs adopted formal mentoring programs. This discrepancy may be attributed to more informal strategies that a number of programs were using to involve fathers in supporting their peers. Among staff with various job titles, program directors were more likely than other staff to report in the survey that their program recruited men to mentor other fathers. We speculate that the differences between the survey and site visit findings, and among responses of staff in different positions, could be due to one of three possibilities: (1) the use of the word "formal" in questions that asked about mentoring may have resulted in staff omitting reports about the use of informal strategies in their programs; (2) program directors may have been more likely to report using mentoring than other staff because they may have had a wider view of all the strategies in use in a program; or (3) program directors, conversely, may have been *less* aware of what was actually taking place, as opposed to what was intended. Given these possibilities, it is useful to consider the site visit data as representing the lower bound in our estimate of the use of mentoring, and program directors' reports as representing the upper bound.

Many Fathers Appreciate the Presence of Male Staff

As discussed in Chapter II, many fathers feel more comfortable interacting with other men, at least upon their initial contact with a program. A number of fathers in the focus groups said that it was easier for them to discuss their needs and other personal issues with a male staff member than with a female one.³ Therefore, many programs emphasized hiring male staff where possible. The survey data showed that employing male staff to recruit

³ However, in some activities, such as teaching their children, fathers expressed the view that the gender of the staff member was unimportant.

fathers and hiring male staff were among the more popular father-friendly strategies that programs used (88 and 86 percent of respondents' programs, respectively, had done so). Among fatherhood coordinators, hiring male staff was one of the most frequently cited successful strategies that their programs had adopted for becoming father-friendly. Teachers and family specialists, however, were less likely to report that hiring male staff was a useful strategy. Perhaps these differences are related to the fact that most fatherhood coordinators were men and most teachers and home visitors were women, and they therefore may have had divergent opinions on the value of men on staff.

Apart from hiring professional male fatherhood staff, some programs made a point of placing program fathers in visible positions. Program staff believed that the presence of fathers in reception areas or classroom settings set a good example for other men and normalized father involvement for them. In that vein, some programs hired participating fathers—for example, as father-involvement specialists or classroom assistants, and a few provided small stipends to encourage fathers to volunteer. As discussed earlier, other programs encouraged formal and informal mentoring, either with program staff or with involved program fathers.

Most Programs Adjusted Their Service Offerings and Referrals to More Effectively Serve Fathers and Attempt to Meet Their Needs

Providing services specifically for fathers and referring fathers for needed services at outside agencies were natural strategies that programs adopted to demonstrate their interest in serving fathers and their families as well. Survey results showed that most programs referred fathers for services with community partners (88 percent). In particular, more than three-quarters of respondents indicated that they had established a relationship with the local Office for Child Support Enforcement (OCSE).⁴ All demonstration grantees, in fact, did more than merely refer fathers for services, they also provided specific services directly through their Early Head Start programs.

Only slightly more than half of respondents (54 percent), however, reported that they conducted needs assessments for fathers, an essential first step to tailoring services to their needs. This gap indicates that staff in many programs did not have a formal way to determine and document the services fathers needed. Even fewer programs provided bilingual activities for non-English-speaking fathers (47 percent); the survey, however, did not allow respondents to indicate whether the strategy was not needed, which could be the case in some programs. Chapter V discusses these issues in more detail, describing the needs assessment process and the services that programs offer to fathers. Chapter VI also discusses the nature of programs' collaborations with OCSE.

⁴ Nearly all program directors (95 percent) indicated that there was a relationship with OCSE. The overall average was lower because of the lower levels of family specialist staff who indicated this was the case (and who may have been unaware of such a relationship).

Changing Program Culture Involved Policy, Administrative, and Operational Changes

Early Head Start is designed as a family program, however, mothers tend to be the primary participants with their children. The current challenge is to change the culture of the program and embrace ways to include fathers as an integral part of the families it serves. What is referred to here as “program culture” includes nine strategies spanning policy decisions, administrative practices, and operational procedures (Table III.1). Clearly defined policies have allowed programs to establish their goals for implementing fatherhood services. The majority of respondents (80 percent) believed their program conveyed an image that Early Head Start was for fathers, as well as for mothers and children. However, a low overall proportion of staff reported that their program had established clear policies that conveyed the expectation that fathers should, and would, participate in the program (58 percent). Illustrating the extent of this problem, staff in diverse positions varied widely in their perceptions of these policies. Fatherhood coordinators were most likely to indicate that the program had established such policies (74 percent), whereas family specialists were least likely (35 percent; not shown in table). Teachers and program directors fell between (61 and 63 percent, respectively). These mixed responses may indicate that programs still were not able after two years of implementation to fully integrate the father focus into their programs and have it clearly understood by staff at all levels.

Evaluating staff on their efforts to involve fathers was another way to send a clear signal that father involvement was an important and expected part of their jobs. Including these evaluations in the staff performance assessment process served to cement the intent of the programs’ fatherhood policies and to spur staff to greater efforts. However, staff evaluations in this area were rarely adopted (25 percent), perhaps because the father involvement efforts had only recently been implemented.

Most of the programs implemented administratively focused changes, such as using forms that provided spaces for fathers’ information (87 percent) and collecting the fathers’ contact information if it differed from that of the mothers (84 percent). Fatherhood staff believed that these basic activities send a strong signal to families and to staff about the importance of father involvement. Most programs also viewed the integration of fatherhood and regular staff as important to firmly establish the fatherhood focus. Such integration often meant involving all staff in efforts to recruit fathers and keeping all staff aware of ongoing male-involvement activities. Several fatherhood coordinators cited the integration of staff as the most successful strategy undertaken; likewise, several teachers cited the use of enrollment forms to record father information as the most successful strategy.

Mothers were often described by staff as gatekeepers, primarily in the context of regulating a father’s contact with his child. At times, mothers also act as gatekeepers to a program. In some cases, the reasons for not including the fathers in program activities were due to a bad relationship between the mother and the father; although, in other instances the exclusion had protective qualities. Some mothers did not want the fathers to be bothered by program staff, or they were interested in keeping the program their own. Several home-visiting staff reported that they had encountered resistance from mothers to including the fathers—in part, because mothers feared that including fathers might interfere with the close

relationships they developed with home visitors. Most programs attempted to address these issues by adopting the strategy of talking with mothers about their concerns and encouraging them to cooperate with fathers. Staff reported that this approach worked in many situations where there was no abuse or violence. In cases where the mother's motives for not including fathers were to keep the program her own, other strategies were more successful, such as creating parallel activities and groups for mothers.

Somewhat fewer programs were able to implement operational strategies, such as allowing staff sufficient time to recruit fathers and providing staff the flexibility to schedule activities when fathers could attend. Some staff interviewed during site visits indicated that they spent their personal time doing additional outreach activities or attending special father-child events. Programs that desire staff members to recruit fathers, but that do not allow sufficient time for these activities to take place during regular work hours, are sending mixed signals to their staff.

Physical Program Environment Was an Important Factor in Making Early Head Start Appear Inviting to Fathers

The physical program environment was another way that programs transmitted their culture. One Early Head Start teacher talked about his first impression of his new classroom—that the walls were devoid of male imagery except for anti-domestic abuse posters. Environmental signals such as these could play an important role in sending a message to fathers that they are not welcome in the program. Overall, staff who responded to the survey indicated that their program or center environment was father-friendly, and it was the third most popularly endorsed father-friendliness strategy in the survey.

From our interviews, we learned about specific strategies programs used to make their physical environment father-friendly. Programs tried a few things to make the atmosphere welcoming to men, such as: (1) hanging pictures of program fathers in collages, (2) hanging posters about the importance of fathers, (3) having men present in the reception area or classroom, and (4) planning activities specifically for fathers to do with their children during home visits. One staff member reported that reading the question in the survey inspired her to hang pictures of fathers in her classroom, something she had previously not realized was lacking. Among teachers, the second most frequently cited successful strategy was making the physical space within the center more father-friendly.

Some fatherhood staff felt that providing private space for fathers was also important in facilitating their ability to talk with staff about personal issues. However, providing this space was one of the least endorsed strategies (32.9 percent), although with a few notable exceptions. Programs may have been hampered in their efforts to provide space based on the limitations of their facilities. In two programs, the fatherhood coordinators allowed fathers to use their offices and computers, and men seemed to appreciate these gestures of trust.



DEDICATING SPACE FOR FATHERS IN EARLY HEAD START CENTERS



Two Early Head Start programs were notable for their provision of facilities and resources specifically for fathers. These were Family Star Montessori Early Head Start (Denver, CO), and Action for Boston Community Development (Dorchester, MA). Family Star has embarked on an ambitious project to build a fatherhood learning center within the program. Program managers view the project as a community resource offering a variety of services such as fatherhood classes and support groups, technical assistance for fatherhood advocates and program operators, and employment resource and job training for fathers. The center would be housed in a currently vacant portion of the Family Star building. This undertaking was at an early stage at the time of the second site visit, although there had been meetings to brainstorm ideas and enlist potential community collaborators.

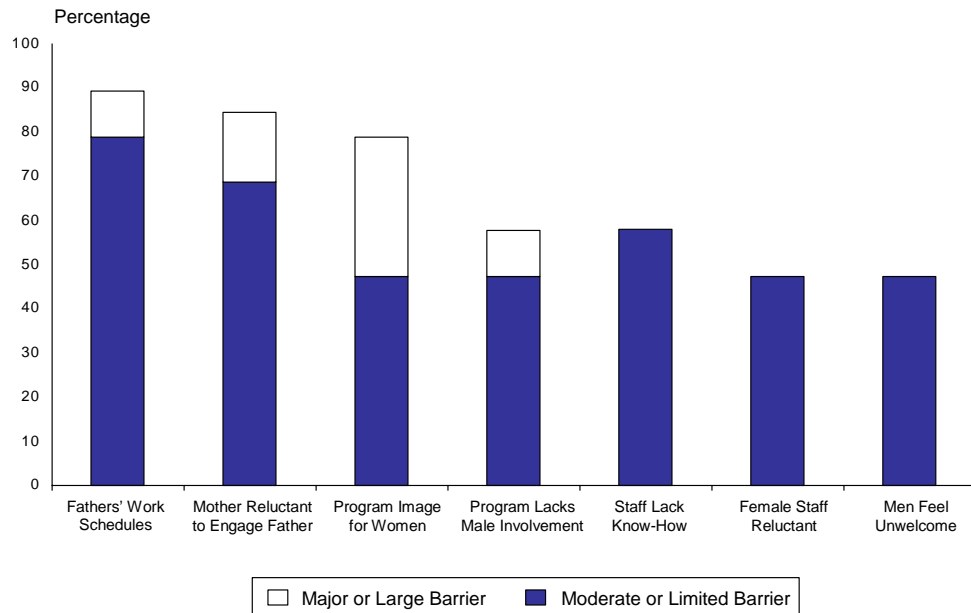
On a smaller scale, the Dorchester father involvement coordinator had a private office large enough to provide space for fathers to use as well. This space is useful for fathers to discuss private matters with him. The fathers have access to a computer in this office and are free to access the Internet, print resumes, and perform other tasks.

Despite Progress, Programs Faced Ongoing Barriers to Becoming Father-Friendly

Although programs were active in implementing a range of father-friendly strategies at the time of the second round of site visits, many still faced substantial challenges. Figure III.1 presents directors' responses to questions about the extent to which they faced specific barriers in their attempts to involve fathers.⁵ Overall, the most problematic barriers to father-friendliness were fathers' work schedules interfering with participation, mothers not wanting fathers to be involved, the overall lack of existing father involvement, and an engrained image of Early Head Start as a program for women. Some staff considered these serious barriers to their efforts to become welcoming to fathers. Other barriers hindered some programs, but to a lesser extent, and were not a problem for many of them. The demonstration programs planned to continue to test new ways of overcoming these barriers as they gained more experience working with fathers.

⁵ Staff members in all categories were generally in agreement about the barriers. Since directors were asked the full range of questions, and other staff members were asked only a subset, only the directors' responses are presented in the figure.

**Figure III.1: Barriers to Father-Friendliness
(Percentage of Programs)**



Source: Early Head Start Fatherhood Demonstration Staff Survey.

Note: Data reflect the responses of Early Head Start Directors only.

MANY REPORT PROGRESS TOWARD MATURE STAGE OF FATHER-FRIENDLINESS

To sum up our father-friendliness focus, respondents to the staff survey were asked to rate where their program was in its stage of becoming father-friendly (Figure III.2). The possible choices were:

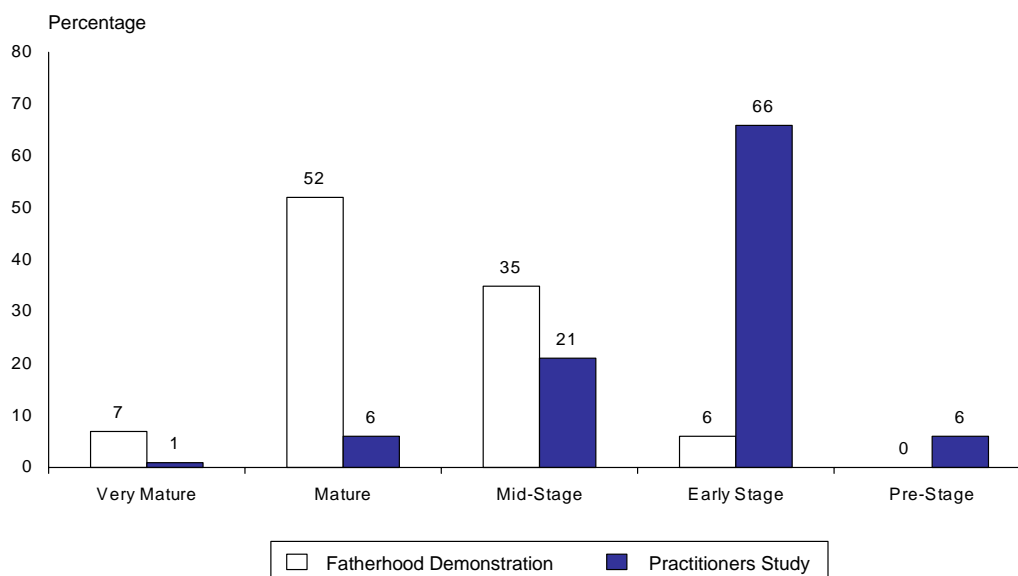
1. **“Pre-stage”**: The program involves parents (mother, father, surrogates) in a general way. Little, if any, thought has been given to the unique issues of involving any parent beyond the mother and to what would be required to plan for their involvement.
2. **“Early”**: Some fathers are involved. Most program activities still revolve around women and children. Some thought and effort have gone into father involvement, but it is not one of the top two or three focuses for the program.
3. **“Mid-stage”**: Program has developed ways to increase its attention to father involvement and has begun to show a concerted effort in father involvement. Some exciting and promising changes are occurring as more staff and parents gain a sense of how to make the program father-friendly. Father Involvement

Coordinator may be hired and that person does a good job of keeping other staff aware of father involvement.

4. **“Mature”**: Many changes have been made in making the program father-friendly. Father involvement coordinator now focuses more on integrating fathers into the program and applying all program activities to fathers. Programs may be more focused on fathers in the family as the target rather than on fathers per se. Many resident fathers are now involved with the program. Some nonresident fathers are involved.
5. **“Very Mature”**: Most resident fathers are involved in the program on at least a monthly basis. The program offers a great variety of father-involvement activities. Many nonresident fathers are involved and there are many creative efforts in place for involving nonresident fathers.

Across each of the job categories, staff were generally in agreement that their programs were in either the mid-stage to mature stage of father-friendliness. (The average rating was 3.6, which fell between mid-stage and mature in our rating scale.) There also was general agreement across the staff ratings within programs, with most staff in a given program indicating that the stage of development was the same or at the adjacent level. In a few

**Figure III.2: Programs’ Stage of Father-Friendliness
(Percentage of Programs)**



Source: Early Head Start Fatherhood Demonstration Staff Survey and Early Head Start Practitioners Study (Raikes et al. 2002)

Note: Data reflect the responses of Early Head Start Directors only.

programs however, there were more marked disagreements among staff. The most divergent ratings were in three programs, in which staff ratings were at least two levels apart—for example, some staff members rated program development as “early,” while others rated the stage as “mature.” These findings display a serious division among staff opinions. Programs may find it useful to continually assess their staff perceptions of progress toward program goals and, in that way, may avoid such discrepancies by implementing some of the strategies discussed above to help get across the idea of father involvement and provide staff with the time and resources needed to do that work well.

As expected, given that the 21 demonstration programs received special grants to create fatherhood initiatives, the self-report of their stage of father-friendliness ranked above average, compared to Early Head Start programs nationwide. In their national survey of programs, Raikes et al. (2002) found that 72 percent of programs rated their stage of development as “pre-stage” or “early,” with only 21 percent reporting “mid-stage” and 7 percent reporting “mature” or “very mature.” Most of these programs were at a much earlier stage of developing a father focus and did not have dedicated funds to start comprehensive fatherhood initiatives. With the resources provided through the Early Head Start Fatherhood Demonstration, the 21 grantees were able to hire a Father Involvement Coordinator, create activities specifically for men, and work to make their program environments more appealing to men. These steps are promising and demonstrate that, by and large, the programs are making a sincere effort to welcome fathers and involve them in activities. Clearly, serious barriers to father-friendliness remain in many programs, and programs continue to work toward overcoming the ongoing challenges that accompany fundamental change within established programs.

CHAPTER IV

HOW DO PROGRAMS REACH OUT TO FATHERS?

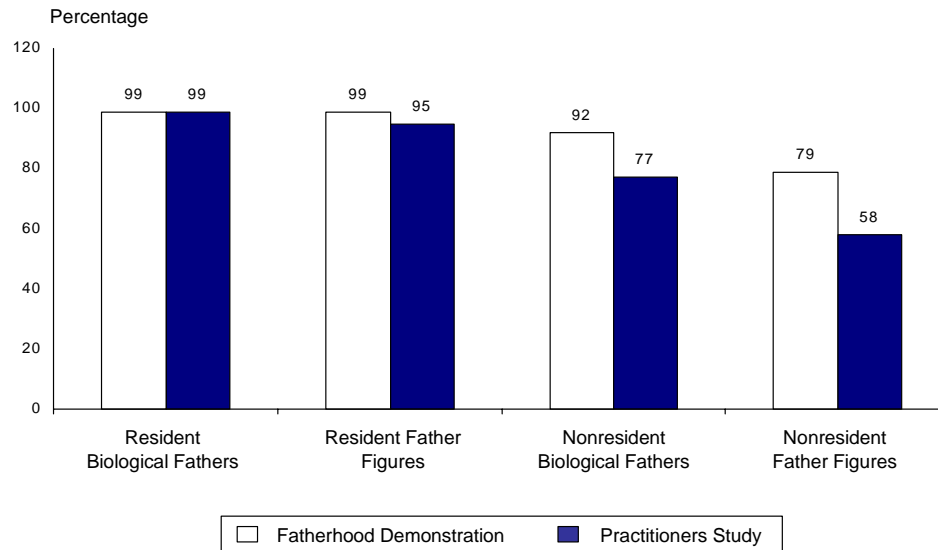
All of the demonstration programs were actively recruiting and enrolling fathers from their communities at the time of the second round of site visits. Over two years of implementation, the programs tested a variety of strategies to engage fathers and keep them involved in the program. This period of experimentation and growth enabled programs to reflect on their recruitment practices, identify barriers, and begin to develop some promising practices. All programs agreed that father recruitment was a significant challenge and encouraged programs interested in involving fathers not to underestimate the difficulty of the task. This chapter discusses the types of fathers that the demonstration programs were trying to involve, as well as the strategies they were using to engage these fathers in program activities.

THE TYPES OF FATHERS THAT PROGRAMS TRIED TO INVOLVE

As discussed in Chapter I, the demonstration programs adopted a broad definition of “father,” attempting to include a wide range of men who were involved in the lives of the children they served. As seen in Figure IV.1, nearly all respondents to the staff survey reported that their programs tried to engage biological fathers and father figures who lived with the enrolled child. Only slightly fewer (92 percent) indicated that they actively attempted to involve nonresident biological fathers. Nearly 80 percent of respondents identified nonresident father figures as a target population for their fatherhood initiative as well. Overall, the demonstration grantees reported making greater efforts to involve nonresident biological fathers and father figures than Early Head Start programs generally (Raikes et al. 2002). As discussed earlier, the demonstration funding enabled these programs to hire staff dedicated to working with fathers, positioning them to expand their efforts to recruit all types of men.

Many demonstration programs also boosted father outreach by going beyond the Early Head Start program to recruit a broader range of men. Six programs reported efforts to recruit fathers from their Head Start programs, and four programs reported recruiting other fathers from within the community. These fathers were often referred to the program by

Figure IV.1 Types of Fathers that Programs Tried to Involve in Early Head Start (Percentage of Respondents Reporting the Program Targets Each Group)



Source: Early Head Start Fatherhood Demonstration Staff Survey and Early Head Start Practitioners Study (Raikes et al. 2002).

Note: Data from the fatherhood demonstration reflect the combined responses of directors, fatherhood coordinators, home visitors and family workers, and teachers.



ENGAGING “GODFATHERS” FOR CHILDREN WITHOUT MALE ROLE MODELS



During the second year of the demonstration, New York Foundling (Hato Rey, PR) developed a unique “padrino” (or godfather) component within their Parenting Activities for Papi’s Involvement (PAPI) Project. Padrinos are men from the local community who serve as father figures to Early Head Start children who do not have a man involved in their lives. To be eligible, applicants need to be available to spend at least two hours each week with the child, comply with child support, and have several positive, personal attributes, such as patience, a sense of humor, and integrity. When the padrino program first began, Early Head Start fatherhood staff matched appropriate applicants to Early Head Start children. However, some mothers expressed concern about having staff select father figures for their children; as a result, the program was adapted to allow each mother to nominate a godfather for her child. Staff evaluated the candidate’s home and assessed whether he was an acceptable candidate before he and the mother signed a joint commitment form and action plan. The PAPI project gave padrinos \$50 each to pay for activities with the child.

other divisions within the grantee agencies or by community partners. Facilitating that process, several of the programs were housed within community action agencies or were closely linked to community-based family services and local employment services agencies. In an effort to target limited resources and staff time as effectively as possible, the rest of the demonstration programs consciously decided to limit their services to only fathers of Early Head Start children.

STRATEGIES TO ENGAGE FATHERS IN EARLY HEAD START

The demonstration programs faced a broad range of challenges when trying to make initial contact with fathers and subsequently attempting to engage them in program activities. Fathers did not often take part in the application to and enrollment in Early Head Start. As a result, programs had to seize every opportunity to engage fathers in program activities. Most used a mix of standard recruiting tools (such as bulletins and flyers) and specialized outreach efforts to attract fathers to the program and keep them involved.

Family Enrollment Offered the Earliest Opportunity to Engage Fathers

Enrollment served as one of the earliest points of identifying and recruiting fathers. In fact, staff from several programs viewed this as a crucial first step to father recruitment. Nearly all of the programs used the enrollment process to convey the message that Early Head Start is a family program, not just a program for mothers and children. By introducing and highlighting program services for fathers during enrollment, programs conveyed the message that father involvement was important and thus, from the start, created an expectation that fathers should participate.

All but two programs actively used the enrollment process as a first step to father identification. To collect father information, these programs included father program materials in their enrollment packets, modified their enrollment forms to obtain more detailed father information, or used additional forms to collect data on fathers. About 40 percent of the programs reported during site visits that they had changed their enrollment forms (some more than once) to obtain information on fathers.

During site-visit interviews, staff described other strategies for involving fathers in enrollment. Nearly one-third of the programs took additional steps to include the father in the enrollment process. Whenever possible, some scheduled enrollment meetings at a time when both parents could attend. A few scheduled a separate enrollment meeting with the father if he was unable to attend at a time when the mother was available. One program consistently involved fatherhood staff in the family enrollment meeting. The fatherhood staff member used this opportunity to introduce himself to one or both parents, describe the program, and either invite the father directly to attend program events or encourage the mother to do so. Another program did not consider the enrollment process complete—if the biological father lived with the child—until both parents had signed the enrollment form.

Most programs reported that they had a mechanism by which to share contact and other important information collected during enrollment among the range of staff who would play a role in the family's program participation. Two-thirds of the programs reported that home visitors and teachers regularly shared information with fatherhood staff at scheduled meetings or informally. This allowed the fatherhood staff to effectively follow up with fathers independently or as a team with other staff. Only one program reported that the home visitors provided the names of interested fathers on request from its fatherhood staff, rather than through scheduled meetings.

Most Programs Relied Heavily on Mothers to Help Involve Fathers

Despite efforts to involve fathers in enrollment, mothers still often initiated enrollment for their children, and many attended the enrollment meeting alone. As a result, staff relied heavily on mothers to inform fathers about the program and involve them in program services. One staff member stated: "It is easier to recruit the fathers if we can pitch the program to the mother." According to the staff survey, about three-quarters of fatherhood coordinators reported that they relied on the child's mother, to a great or very great extent, when trying to involve fathers. Staff members tended to work with mothers more often when trying to engage resident fathers than nonresident fathers. Specifically, about 84 percent of home visitors and 83 percent of teachers relied heavily on the child's mother when trying to involve a resident father, compared to only 63 and 56 percent, respectively, when trying to engage nonresident fathers. This may result from staff perceptions that mothers had less stable or amicable relationships with fathers who were not living with them or their children. Regardless of whether they worked through the mother to engage the father, most respondents (88 percent) kept the mother informed by talking to her about the situation when attempting to involve a nonresident father in program activities (Table IV.1).

According to evidence from site visits, the strategy of using mothers to help recruit fathers appeared to have been successful in many programs. At least some fathers in each of the focus groups held at the 21 programs reported that they heard about Early Head Start through the mother of their child. Staff still believed, however, that the attitudes of some mothers toward father involvement remained a barrier to successfully engaging men (Figure III.1). Therefore, programs planned to continue efforts to help mothers understand the importance of involving fathers in the program and in their children's lives.

Most Programs Attempted to Make All Staff Responsible for Engaging Fathers

An important step toward more effectively engaging men was for programs to ensure that all staff were responsible for recruiting fathers. Naturally, fatherhood staff had particular responsibilities in reaching out to fathers. To supplement the efforts of fatherhood staff, several programs also were using participating or graduate fathers to recruit other men. Many programs reported that the high visibility of males—including staff, mentors, and other fathers—encouraged fathers to engage in program activities and could act as a subtle, yet important, recruiting technique.

**Table IV.1: Strategies for Involving Nonresident Fathers in Program Activities
(Percentage of Respondents Reporting that the Program Used this Strategy)**

	All Staff	Director	Fatherhood Coordinator	Family Worker/ Home Visitor	Teacher
Discuss Situation with the Mother	88.2	84.2	84.2	90.0	94.4
Call Father to Include in Group Activities/Events	71.1	78.9	89.5	55.0	61.1
Invite Father to Events by Mail	68.4	78.9	78.9	65.0	50.0
Invite Nonresident Fathers in Person	68.4	63.2	84.2	60.0	66.7
Prepare Duplicate Materials for Fathers	46.1	52.6	52.6	35.0	44.4
Prepare Mailing List of Nonresident Fathers	40.8	42.1	57.9	40.0	22.2
Conduct Home Visits to Nonresident Fathers	35.5	52.6	36.8	25.0	27.8
Hold Meetings for Nonresident Fathers	26.3	26.3	31.6	20.0	27.8
Invite Father to Home Visits by Mail	23.7	26.3	26.3	15.0	27.8
Mail Progress Notes to Father	13.2	10.5	0.0	20.0	22.2
Sample Size	76	19	19	20	18

Source: Early Head Start Fatherhood Demonstration Staff Survey.

Two-thirds of the programs reported during the second round of site visits that staff in all positions were involved in, and responsible for, recruiting fathers. Family workers, home visitors, and teachers had many different points of contact with families and fathers. As discussed in Chapter III, face-to-face contact between the fathers and staff was consistently identified as one of the most successful techniques for engaging men. This reinforced the need to train all staff members on the importance of involving fathers with their children and the program and to assess how effectively they work to meet the needs of participating fathers.

Staff Reported the Need to Take Advantage of Every Opportunity to Engage Fathers

Family enrollment was only one of many potential opportunities for interaction with fathers. To successfully engage fathers, program staff reported the need to think about ways to include fathers in all phases of their work. Many staff members felt strongly that their programs needed to take advantage of all interactions with fathers, whether scheduled or unplanned, to recruit new fathers for the first time and to engage involved fathers in additional activities.

Programs used several approaches to “buttonhole” fathers when they entered the program. One-quarter of the programs reported great success in taking advantage of the brief encounters the fathers have with teaching staff when they drop off or pick up their children from Early Head Start centers. Teachers and other program staff present at those times used this opportunity to relay programmatic information to the fathers, invite them into the classroom for informal activities with their children, or just talk to fathers about their children’s day. Food or other refreshments offered during these times provided opportunities for staff and fathers to get to know each other. Table IV.1 indicates, however, that fatherhood coordinators (84 percent) were more likely to invite nonresident fathers to activities during these in-person encounters than were other staff members (60 percent of home visitors; 67 percent of teachers).

In addition to capitalizing on unscheduled meetings with fathers, many program staff were rethinking the way in which they scheduled program activities and events. Fathers’ work schedules were reported as a leading barrier to father involvement (Figure III.1). Several programs responded by trying to schedule home visits and program activities at times when fathers could attend. These strategies, however, posed major challenges, given staff availability during evening and weekend hours. Chapter V discusses this issue in more detail.

Mailing Information and Invitations to Fathers Was Common But Was Not Perceived to Be as Successful as Telephone and In-Person Invitations

Mailings were one of the most commonly used strategies for recruiting fathers and keeping them involved; however, many staff did not find them useful. About 68 percent of all respondents reported that their programs sent fathers invitations to events by mail (Table IV.1). Fatherhood coordinators were more likely than other staff members to mail fathers invitations or send duplicates of materials that are mailed to mothers. However, during site-visit interviews, few programs identified these mailings as successful in reaching fathers. Programs serving migrant or transient populations found mailings especially unproductive. Nonetheless, many programs continued to send mailings as a way of impressing on fathers that they were welcome and appreciated at Early Head Start.



REACHING OUT TO TEEN PARENTS



The fatherhood programs at Texas Tech University (Lubbock, TX) and Family Development Services, Inc. (Indianapolis, IN) made special efforts to reach out to teen parents through partnerships with local high schools. In Lubbock, the fatherhood coordinator, in collaboration with other Early Head Start staff members, held monthly sessions on parenting at a local high school for students who were mothers and fathers. In Indianapolis, the fatherhood coordinator led discussion groups with teen fathers at two local high schools. Through these parenting enhancement sessions, local staff hoped to provide the additional support to help these young parents understand the critical role they play in their children’s lives.

Telephone and in-person contacts were generally reported to be more successful. In fact, nearly 90 percent of fatherhood coordinators reported calling fathers to invite them to group activities or events. As discussed in Chapter III, personal attention by staff reinforced the message that Early Head Start is a family program where the presence of fathers is very important.

Programs Often Augmented Their Standard Recruitment Strategies with Unique Activities That Broadened Program Exposure Within the Community

Many programs supplemented their recruiting with more unusual approaches that proved effective in engaging fathers. Two programs broadcasted public service announcements about the father program on local television and radio stations. Other programs made use of already established collaborations with other local agencies and programs to make presentations about their fatherhood initiatives. And nearly all programs created brochures and posted bulletins and announcements about activities and events within the Early Head Start program, throughout the neighborhoods, and at collaborating agencies and programs. To specifically attract fathers, one program used posters to announce regularly scheduled sporting events that were coupled with father workshops and discussion groups.



USING RADIO AND OTHER MASS MEDIA TO SPREAD THE WORD



The “Fathers In Training” coordinator at Family Development Services, Inc. (Indianapolis, IN) used his experience in radio to spread the word about their fatherhood program within the community. On the last Thursday of every month, the coordinator appeared on a local radio station to promote his work with fathers at Early Head Start. His intention was to reach a broader audience through this radio medium and promote awareness about the importance of fathers’ involvement with their young children. His appearance each month usually generated several phone calls from individuals interested in learning about services that Family Development Services, Inc. provides to fathers from the community. The Fathers Matter program at Wabash Area Development, Inc. (Enfield, IL) also used mass media to reach out to fathers in its large multi-county rural service area. Program staff made several presentations about the fatherhood program on local radio stations. A local newspaper also ran a front-page photograph of the Fathers Matter participants who had helped in a project to landscape one of the Early Head Start centers. This publicity served as a good recruitment tool with several individuals from the community inquiring about the program as a result of the newspaper coverage.

A Small but Increasing Number of Programs Were Reaching Out to Incarcerated Fathers

For most programs, incarcerated fathers continued to pose additional challenges to father involvement. During the first year of the demonstration, only one-quarter of programs made an effort to engage incarcerated fathers. By the second year, just over 50 percent of respondents to the survey reported that they had made some effort to engage men in prison. Given the workloads of most Early Head Start staff members, reaching out to incarcerated fathers was often given low priority. About 44 percent of respondents

discussed the situation with the mother when the child's father was incarcerated (Figure IV.2). A much smaller fraction of respondents took steps to involve incarcerated fathers more directly by visiting them in prison, talking to their wardens, sending program reports or child progress reports, or conducting home visits in prison. Nevertheless, a few programs have found some success in these efforts.

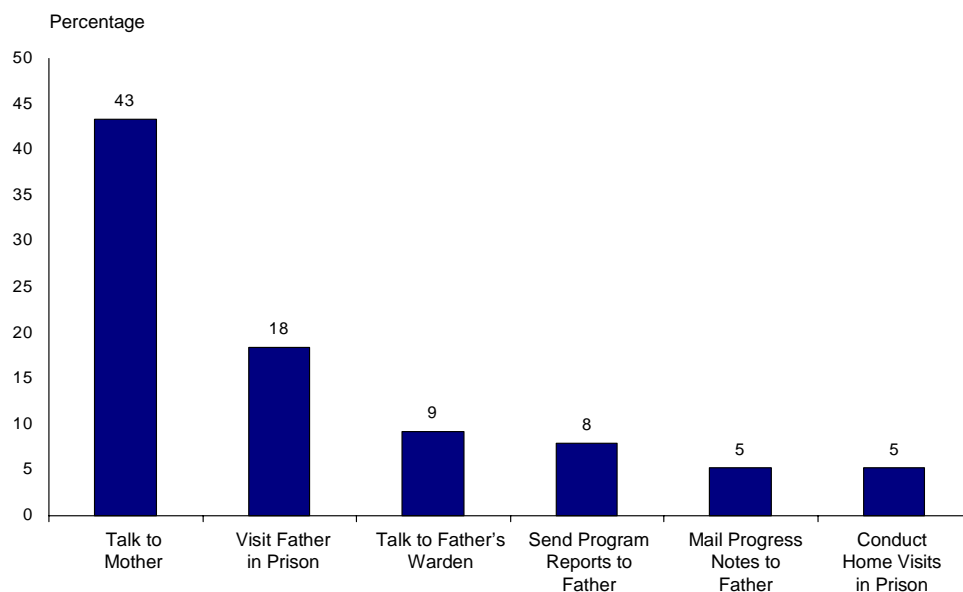


REACHING OUT TO INCARCERATED FATHERS



Fatherhood staff at Action for Boston Community Development (Dorchester, MA) made special efforts to maintain contact with imprisoned fathers. When contact information was available for an incarcerated father, and the mother consented to his involvement, staff sent an initial letter describing the fatherhood program and mailed periodic reports on the child's progress. The program aimed to keep fathers updated on their child's development in hopes of encouraging their continued involvement with their children and future participation in the Early Head Start program. Six incarcerated fathers maintained contact with fatherhood staff through these mailings, and two fathers subsequently sought employment assistance from Early Head Start upon their release from jail.

**Figure IV.2: Strategies for Involving Incarcerated Fathers
(Percentage of Respondents Who Reported Using Each Strategy)**



Source: Early Head Start Fatherhood Demonstration Staff Survey.

Note: Data reflect the combined responses of directors, fatherhood coordinators, home visitors and family workers, and teachers.

CHAPTER V

WHAT ACTIVITIES DO FATHERS PARTICIPATE IN?

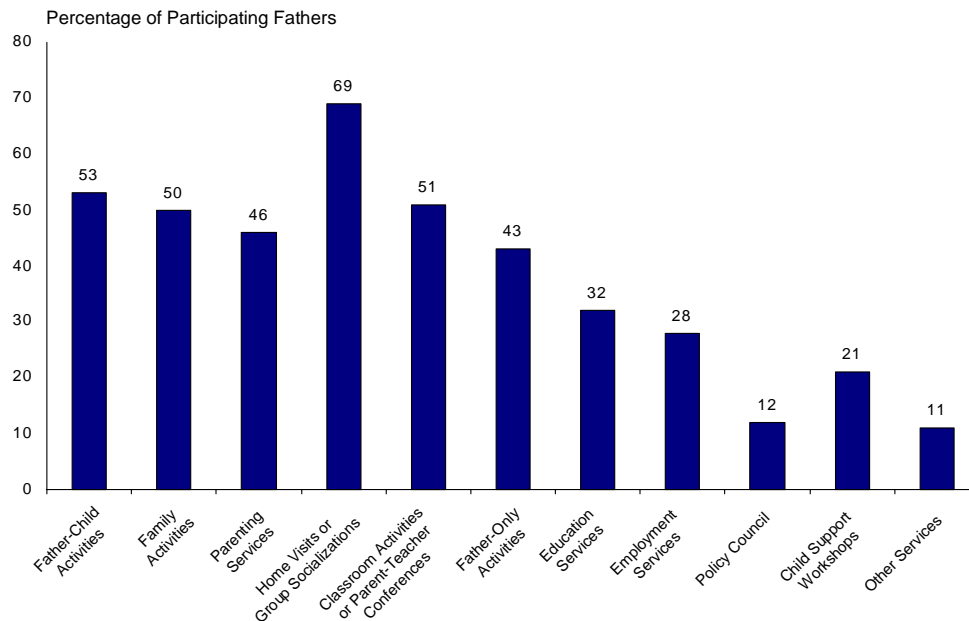
The demonstration programs attempted to develop an innovative set of services to help the fathers of children enrolled in their programs meet their goals. Many of these activities provided an opportunity for fathers to spend time with their children and families in the context of the program and encouraged their continued involvement outside the program. As research shows, Early Head Start programs can influence father participation in a range of activities, such as home visits, parenting classes and events, and parent-child activities (ACF 2002), and high levels of participation in these types of programs may be associated with increases in overall father involvement with their children (Fagan and Iglesias 1999).

As shown in Figure V.1, no single activity tended to draw the majority of men into the demonstration programs; instead, father participation appeared to be spread over a range of activities. After two years' experience, the grantees used an approach to serving men that had evolved into a blend of involving fathers in existing services and designing new services targeted specifically at fathers. This chapter first discusses how the demonstration grantees assessed the service needs and interests of fathers, then discusses program efforts to involve fathers in family development and child development services. Finally, we describe the range of activities that programs designed specifically for fathers.

ASSESSING FATHERS' NEEDS

The ability to identify and respond to fathers' needs was central to engaging fathers in Early Head Start. All Early Head Start programs must work with families through the Family Partnership Agreement (FPA) process to set goals and develop plans for achieving them. Most of the demonstration programs, however, found it difficult to engage fathers in this process, and some found it necessary to develop alternative strategies to help ensure that fathers' needs were identified and met.

**Figure V.1: Father Participation in Early Head Start Services in Past 6 Months
(Percentage of Fathers)**



Source: Early Head Start Fatherhood Demonstration Father/Father Figure Information Forms.

Note: Data pertain to fathers and father figures who had participated in at least one Early Head Start activity within the past 6 months.

Ongoing Assessment Allowed Staff to Gain Fathers' Trust and Respond to Changing Needs

According to staff, the most successful approach to identifying fathers' needs appeared to involve gradual, informal, and ongoing assessment. Most programs found it difficult to assess fathers' needs before having fully gained their trust. Staff members thought that it was important to follow up with fathers on an ongoing basis, since their needs changed over time. While some information was gathered through an initial intake or assessment, a more thorough understanding of fathers' needs came over time. In talking with fathers informally on a one-to-one basis, staff were able to gain their trust and, as a result, more fully understand their needs and goals.

Most Programs Did Not Integrate Fathers' "Case Management" Into the FPA Process

Programs assessed fathers' needs and planned services to address them using one of three approaches. Of course, program approaches cannot be easily categorized, and there was variance within each. Nonetheless, programs tended to fall into three groupings, based on the extent to which they involve fathers in the FPA process, assess and respond to fathers' needs separately from the FPA, and encourage coordination between Early Head Start staff and fatherhood staff in responding to fathers' needs.

First, in only a handful of programs, case management for fathers was fully integrated into the Early Head Start program. In these programs, Early Head Start staff actively tried to involve fathers in developing the FPA and took steps to accommodate their schedules to ensure that they were present for case management meetings. For example, if the mother and father were not living together, home visitors in one program would arrange the schedule so the father could be present when the FPA was developed. These meetings were also sometimes conducted at the program office to provide a neutral location. If it was not possible for fathers to be present, Early Head Start staff in these programs coordinated with fatherhood staff to assess fathers' needs separately. Fatherhood coordinators in these programs regularly conducted needs assessment with fathers as a supplement to the FPA.

Second, about half of all programs adopted an approach in which case management was provided primarily through the fatherhood project and was only partially integrated into the existing Early Head Start system. In these programs, no special efforts were made to accommodate fathers' schedules and ensure that they were involved in the FPA process. While Early Head Start staff attempted to involve fathers in the process if they were present at meetings, typically only the mother was involved. In these programs, the fatherhood coordinator provided fathers with a needs assessment that was separate from the FPA.

Third, due to the difficulty of engaging fathers in the FPA process, another one-third of programs made only minimal efforts to integrate case management for fathers into the Early Head Start program, and did not conduct formal needs assessments for fathers. These programs assessed fathers' needs primarily through enrollment questionnaires or by working with the child's mother to set goals for the father and the family as a whole. These programs involved fathers in the FPA process only when they were present for meetings, but they did not make a concerted effort to ensure that fathers would be present. Some of these programs required that fathers review and sign the FPA, but they were not necessarily involved in the process of identifying their own needs and goals. None of these programs conducted a separate needs assessment through the fatherhood project.

FAMILY DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

Family development services provided many opportunities for fathers to bond with their children and families. These services took many forms but often included social events for families, family mediation services, and parenting services. All the demonstration programs offered a range of family development services and sought to involve fathers in various ways. Many used these activities to teach families of limited resources how to have fun and spend quality time together without spending money. Others sought to promote healthy relationships between parents, which in turn could help remove barriers to father involvement.

Father-Child Activities Rose in Priority as Programs Gained Experience Serving Fathers

While programs continued efforts during the second year of the demonstration to make support groups and other activities for fathers more appealing, some fathers still preferred to be involved in family events or father-child activities. Many programs used these activities to supplement their father groups, while a few chose to offer family and father-child events instead of support groups. Father-child activities, in particular, grew substantially since the first year of the demonstration with just over half of participating fathers involved in these activities (Figure V.1). During the first year of the demonstration, few programs gave priority to providing opportunities for fathers to spend quality time alone with their children (Bellotti 2002). Over time, demand for such services grew as fathers actively sought out and suggested activities where they could bond with their children.



A BOOK OF FATHER-CHILD ACTIVITIES



To encourage fathers to participate in their children's growth and education, the male involvement adviser at Youth and Family Services (Rapid City, SD) developed a father-child activity book that presents simple activities for fathers and children. The activities are organized according to the child's age (0-6 months, 6-12 months, etc.) and involve developmentally appropriate practices. Each activity is described in a male-friendly way (for example, some activity titles are "Champion Burper" and "Dad Tag") and is followed by a short explanation of its developmental value. The book was distributed to fathers and home visitors at the program and has received a very positive response from both groups.

Holidays and Special Events Provided an Important Opportunity to Involve the Whole Family in Early Head Start Activities.

Family events that centered on a holiday or special occasion offered an important opportunity for programs to engage the whole family in activities. According to staff, such nonrecurring events were especially appealing to those fathers who were not prepared to make the commitment of time and energy needed to participate in ongoing child development or fatherhood activities, such as weekly support group meetings. These activities also offered an opportunity for staff to meet with fathers who were difficult to engage, to encourage the fathers to attend other activities, and to show them that their presence was appreciated.

While most programs had only limited success in involving fathers in their child's transition out of Early Head Start, the experience of programs that involved the whole family in end-of-the-year graduation ceremonies suggested that such events might be particularly effective in engaging fathers. Staff in two programs reported that fathers were more likely to take time off from work for these ceremonies—in part, because they were nonrecurring events with "no strings attached." These events were also celebrations of their children's accomplishments, where food and cake were served and both immediate and extended family members attended; yet they often represented the last activity that fathers could be involved in while their children were still enrolled in Early Head Start. This suggests that programs may want to consider holding similar events that recognize a child's accomplishment at various points throughout the year.



CREATIVE FAMILY GATHERINGS THAT PROMOTE COMMUNITY AWARENESS



Community Action Agency (Jackson, MI) held a community festival called “Father’s Fair” near Father’s Day in June 2002, to raise awareness of the importance of fathers and to give families an opportunity to celebrate fathers. Local businesses, nonprofit organizations, and churches, as well as the Jackson Police Department and the Friend of the Court, organized informational booths. The children played on an inflatable obstacle course, slide, and ball room. Mike Singletary—retired Chicago Bears linebacker and author of *Daddy’s Home at Last*—served as guest speaker for the event. The program publicized the event through advertisements on community radio stations, newspapers, and local cable access shows, and reported attendance of approximately 200 people from the local community.

Family Activities and Outings Allowed Families with Limited Resources to Spend Quality Time Together Without Spending Money

Nearly all programs held family events—including sports or recreational activities, picnics in the park, retreats, and workshops—and about half (50 percent) of all fathers and father figures were involved in these types of activities (Figure V.I). Yet fathers’ work schedules, time constraints, and lack of interest sometimes served as barriers to participation. As a result, some fatherhood projects found it useful to allow fathers to select the activities they were interested in doing with their families and to plan them during support group meetings. Fathers in one focus group said that one reason they liked being involved with the fatherhood project was that it allowed them to do things with their children that they would not be able to do otherwise, such as going on field trips, eating out at restaurants, and attending sports events.



FATHERS ORGANIZING PROGRAM EVENTS



Sites reported that involving fathers in organizing and leading events can provide men with both a sense of ownership and renewed interest in Early Head Start events. At Central Vermont Community Action Council (Barre, VT), men attending Monday night group meetings for fathers worked to plan family activities—visiting a farm or firehouse, bowling, fishing, camping, snowshoeing, and making scrap books, etc.—for the following Sunday. At Youth and Family Services (Rapid City, SD), fathers from the male involvement project organized two family night events each year of the demonstration that included a Super Bowl party, a trip to the Black Hills Speedway, and a tailgate at a Red Dogs football game. Similarly, the Fatherhood First project at The Children’s Center for Cicero/Berwyn (Cicero, IL) held planning meetings with fathers to determine what types of activities they wanted to do in the future. Activities included trips to Six Flags Great America, the Field Museum, the Brookfield Zoo, and the Children’s Museum at Navy Pier. Fathers also participated in fundraising activities to support these events. Texas Tech University (Lubbock, TX) also had fathers help plan program activities. For example, the program asked fathers who were professional cooks to do the cooking at the Early Head Start Program summer picnic. The fathers reported that this made them feel like they were contributing to the program, not just receiving services from it.



HAVING FUN AS FAMILIES WITHOUT SPENDING MONEY



Since the start of the demonstration, two programs developed activities with the explicit intent of demonstrating how parents can have fun with their families without spending a lot of money. Community Action Corporation of South Texas (Alice, TX) developed regular “bonding activities” aimed at bringing Early Head Start families together to do low-budget activities that incorporate everyday household items and could be easily replicated at home—for example, making kites, going to the park, or blowing bubbles made with dishwashing soap and water. Similarly, at Action for Bridgeport Community Development (Bridgeport, CT), staff developed “Family Get Together,” a Saturday event offering food and activities. As part of this event, staff took families to a local park to feed the birds, to show parents something they could do on a low budget. They gave the mothers disposable cameras to take pictures of the fathers feeding the birds with their children. Using these photographs, staff started scrapbooks for each family that attended.

Family activities also played an important role in teaching parents how they could have fun as a family on a low budget. For example, many programs sponsored events in public parks, dinners, movie nights, or arts and crafts—all of which families could easily replicate on their own. At the time of the second round of site visits, one program had just begun a series of “family play nights” during which parents and children had dinner and worked on a planned activity together, such as constructing animals out of paper. A fatherhood project in another program decided to make its annual “2Gether Day” celebration a regular event due to the promising number of families who had participated. This event took place in a nearby park and included food, awards, and activities for children and their parents.

Staff Believed that a Focus on Co-Parenting Was Consistent with Their Programs’ Goals and Responsive to Families’ Needs.

Many programs identified the need to support and promote healthy co-parenting relationships as an important part of the fatherhood demonstration. Staff survey results show that almost half of all respondents (46 percent) viewed parents’ inability to get along with one another as, to at least some extent, a barrier to father participation. According to staff reports on individual fathers, 12 percent of all fathers and father figures had relationships with the focal child’s mother that were “neutral,” “somewhat hostile,” or “very hostile” (Table V.1). These same staff reports also showed that, compared to 75 percent of resident biological fathers, only 45 percent of nonresident biological fathers had very friendly relationships with the mother. According to staff reports, nonresident biological fathers were also more likely than other fathers and father figures to have a relationship with the child’s mother that was “somewhat hostile.”

Early Head Start parents commonly raised issues with staff about their romantic relationships, and two-thirds of program directors reported during site visit interviews that they had staff available to talk with parents about these issues. For the most part, staff served as “sounding boards” when individuals needed to vent frustrations about their

partners or as impartial mediators when there was a conflict. Most staff, however, were reluctant to give their opinions or to advise couples. An exception was staff who had received professional training in social work, family therapy, or mental health counseling—they were typically more at ease in confronting these issues with parents in more detail.

Due to competing demands on their time and a lack of training in dealing with relationship issues, 10 programs (about half) noted that they referred individuals or couples to outside agencies when parenting relationship issues arose that staff were not prepared to address. Such service providers included mental health professionals, marriage and family counselors, and anger management trainers. Two programs indicated that they made referrals to local churches for couples interested in marriage, because they felt religious clergy were better equipped to discuss the topic of marriage.

There is growing interest among policymakers in developing interventions to support couple relationships and healthy marriage through a variety of settings, including programs focused on child and family development. As a result, site visit interview respondents were asked whether a program component focused on strengthening couple relationships and supporting the development of healthy marriages would be of interest to them. While most interview respondents reported that strengthening co-parent relationships for the sake of the child was consistent with their program goals, many felt that strengthening couple relationships and supporting healthy marriage was not. Others were concerned that such a focus might simply detract from the goal at hand—increasing father involvement in the lives of their children. Finally, respondents in several programs thought it would be either irrelevant or inappropriate to focus on couple relationships or marriage, given the demographic characteristics or issues faced by many of the families they serve.

Table V.1: Staff Reports on Status of Father’s Relationship with Child’s Mother (Percentage of Fathers)

	All Fathers	Resident Biological	Nonresident Biological	Resident Father Figure	Nonresident Father Figure
Very Friendly	71.4	75.0	44.5	87.0	73.3
Somewhat Friendly	16.3	15.5	27.3	7.2	10.0
Neutral	9.5	8.4	18.0	4.3	13.3
Somewhat Hostile	2.3	0.8	8.6	1.4	3.3
Very Hostile	0.5	0.4	1.6	0.0	0.0
Sample Size	1,388				

Source: Early Head Start Fatherhood Demonstration Father Information Forms.

Note: Data pertain to those fathers who participated in the Early Head Start program within the past 6 months.



HELPING FATHERS WITH ANGER MANAGEMENT



Partnership for Community Action (Decatur, GA) offered training for fathers in how to deal with anger and stress. A professionally trained psychologist provided training as part of the weekly fatherhood meetings. The group sessions helped fathers resolve internal conflicts and improve family functioning. The psychologist also met with fathers individually at their request.

While the majority of programs reported that a focus on strengthening couple relationships was not consistent with their program goals, nine programs (43 percent) indicated that they focused instead on co-parenting. Moreover, 85.5 percent of all staff survey respondents reported that they encouraged mothers to cooperate with fathers. Many respondents suggested that it was important to focus on improving the *quality* of the parental relationship for the sake of the child, rather than being concerned with its *status*. Of the nine programs that focus on co-parenting, five reported that they had activities in place to promote healthy co-parenting relationships—including co-parenting education sessions, support groups for both mothers and fathers, and social and recreational activities to strengthen parenting relationships.



CO-PARENTING WORKSHOPS



The fatherhood project at Family Star (Denver, Co) organized a co-parenting workshop—"In the Best Interest of the Child"—that included a series of sessions that covered such topics as communication strategies, creating a co-parenting plan, and the importance of prioritizing the child's interests. One father who participated in the workshop said, "Going through classes has helped [my girlfriend and me] talk to each other and have respect for each other and the kids." Similarly, the PAPI fatherhood project at New York Foundling (Hato Rey, PR) developed couples support groups for mothers and fathers in response to requests from parents for help with communication and conflict resolution skills. Couple support groups took place every five to six months, incorporated relevant topics from the NCPL curriculum, and aimed to complement the existing fatherhood support groups. Staff found that many parents, regardless of whether they were living together, had difficulty defining their individual roles and responsibilities in rearing their children.

CHILD DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

Child development services are a central component of the Early Head Start program. As a result, involving fathers in these services was a major objective of the fatherhood demonstration. While these services represented an opportunity for fathers to become directly involved in their children's social, emotional, and intellectual development, programs experienced a number of common barriers—such as fathers' work schedules and the discomfort of some men interacting with young children—to engaging fathers in these services. Yet many programs found successful strategies for overcoming these challenges.

Programs Often Engaged Fathers in Center-Based Services When They Dropped Off and Picked Up Their Children

Many programs that offered center-based services were successful in encouraging fathers and father figures to volunteer in the classroom when they came to the center to drop off or pick up their children. Ten programs (out of 19 center-based or mixed-approach programs) reported making use of drop-off and pick-up times to engage fathers in child development services. For example, teachers would encourage fathers who came to drop off their children to stay to help with mealtime, or encourage men who picked up their children to arrive early to help clean up toys and supplies. When volunteering in the classroom was not feasible, teachers in one program provided activities that fathers and mothers could do at home to prepare the classroom, such as decorating bulletin boards. In addition, many teachers reported to fathers on their children's progress when they came to pick up or drop off the child, whereas in the past, they would have thought to provide this information only to the mother. Nevertheless, it was sometimes difficult to engage fathers during these times because they were often on their way to work or ready to return home.

Men Appeared More Comfortable Participating, According to Staff Reports, When Given Clearly Delineated Tasks and Responsibilities

Staff who provided child development services found that men were sometimes unsure of what to do when they were in an Early Head Start classroom or participating in a home visit. Classroom teachers found they could successfully engage fathers by giving them clear roles and responsibilities while volunteering in the classroom. In one center-based program, teachers involved fathers by having them help potty-train male children. In another center,



ENCOURAGING FATHERS TO READ TO THEIR CHILDREN



To help support fathers' participation in their children's education, several demonstration programs created initiatives to encourage fathers to read to their children. According to staff, many Early Head Start fathers do not know how to effectively read to their children. For example, fathers may not know when to speak in a loud or soft voice, when to pause, and when to ask their children questions.

As part of the weekly father meetings at Partnership for Community Action (Decatur, GA), an educational consultant led a "reading-for-dads" program that trained fathers in how to read to children, bought children's books for fathers to take home, and helped fathers improve their own reading skills when appropriate. Similarly, the Next Door Foundation (Milwaukee, WI) encouraged fathers to attend "Read with Me" activities where parents learned how to teach their children the precursor skills needed for reading. The program gave free books to participating parents. Family Services, Inc. (Indianapolis, IN) formed a partnership with WFYI, the Indianapolis Public Broadcasting Station, to support their "Read Daddy Read" program. Offered monthly at four of their Early Head Start centers, the sessions provide families with free books, written reading instructions, and staff demonstration on how to read children's books.

Using a somewhat different strategy, staff at Community Action Corporation of South Texas (Alice, TX) developed a "literacy board" intended to encourage both mothers and fathers to read more to their children. The board contains pictures of participating fathers and mothers reading to their children.

teachers tried to involve men with special skills by giving them specific roles in activities. For example, a father who was a professional disc jockey was assigned to put together the music for an activity held at the center.

Similarly, many of the successful strategies staff used to engage fathers in home visits involved giving men specific tasks to do, as well as explaining how a particular activity benefited the child's development. For example, home visitors sometimes had children bring their books or toys for their fathers to read to them or play with. In one program, home visitors engaged fathers in meal preparation. A home visitor in another program found that fathers really enjoyed doing arts and crafts, such as making their handprints in paint, with their children.



A SPECIAL DAY FOR FATHERS AT EARLY HEAD START CENTERS



Action for Bridgeport Community Development (Bridgeport, CT) held a Dad's Day event where all fathers and father-figures of children enrolled in their Early Head Start and Head Start programs were invited to spend the morning (9 am to 12 pm) in the classroom. Teachers planned special activities for fathers to play and work with their children. Fathers also helped serve the children their meals. Through this special outreach to fathers, the program hoped that fathers would get to know their children's teachers, become more comfortable in the classroom, and learn activities to do with their children at home. The Dad's Day event involved more than 50 men. Program staff reported that, after the event, many fathers were more comfortable coming into the classroom to volunteer and talking with teaching staff about their children's progress when they dropped off and picked up their children.

Hands-On Activities to Help Improve Early Head Start Facilities Allowed Fathers to Make Use of Existing Skills.

Asking fathers to help with improvements to the Early Head Start facilities offered fathers at several programs an opportunity to do something they enjoyed and felt comfortable doing. Fatherhood coordinators in more than half of the programs reported that at least a few fathers were involved in fixing up the Early Head Start grounds, painting, repairing a building, or mowing the lawn. During a focus group in one program, fathers reported that they enjoyed construction projects that were hands-on and allowed them to be outdoors. They also liked the idea of doing something that would benefit their children and the school. In response to fathers' interest in such activities, one program developed a special project in the second year of the demonstration that gave fathers the opportunity to contribute to the centers by repairing and improving the facilities. Given that many of the participating fathers worked in construction, staff felt that the project was particularly successful because it allowed the fathers to showcase their expertise.

Programs Took Some Steps to Accommodate Fathers' Busy Work Schedules

Conflicts with fathers' work schedules continued to pose the greatest challenge to father involvement in child development services. Results from staff surveys demonstrate that

approximately 61 percent of total respondents viewed fathers' work schedules as a barrier to participation, to at least some extent. While some strategies were effective in overcoming this barrier, the level of commitment to working around fathers' schedules was not consistent within or across programs. Nevertheless, some individual staff members, and a small number of programs themselves, were striving to schedule child development activities at times that accommodate fathers' work schedules.

Five programs offering center-based services offered activities or events on weekends or in the evenings and, at one program, activities at two different times on the same day. A few programs explicitly asked parents about times they would like to hold activities, and scheduled accordingly. One program continued to keep extended hours of operation, both in the morning and the evening, to increase the likelihood of engaging working fathers. Fathers in one focus group noted that what they liked best about center-based services was that staff would work around their schedules.

Some individual staff members in five programs reported that they conducted home visits outside of regular business hours of their own volition, but this was not a program-wide practice. One exception was a program in which home visits were commonly conducted on Saturdays or in the early evening on weekdays; this practice preceded the fatherhood demonstration. In one of the five programs, a home visitor "flexed" her schedule so she was able to visit fathers whenever they were available, including Saturdays. Family workers in another program sometimes scheduled home visits on evenings or weekends, but this was still a fairly uncommon practice.

When it was not possible to involve fathers in home visits due to scheduling conflicts, six programs found that they could still involve fathers by leaving homework or other activities for them to do with their children. A few programs had mothers report back to the home visitors afterward. Other strategies for followup included instructing fathers to leave a note detailing what they did with the child, or talking directly with fathers following completion of the activity.

Involving Male Fatherhood Staff in Child Development Services Helped Encourage Fathers to Participate in Those Activities

Staff at several programs believed it was especially effective to have teachers, home visitors, and family workers provide services alongside the fatherhood staff. Many programs reported that this made fathers feel more comfortable and helped remove the image of Early Head Start as a program for mothers and children. Rather than having fatherhood staff meet separately with fathers and then coordinate with other Early Head Start staff, some programs engaged fathers by having fatherhood staff involved in classroom activities and home visits.

Many programs had fatherhood staff stand outside the classrooms to greet fathers during drop-off and pick-up times, and a few programs actually had fatherhood staff participate in classroom activities. One fatherhood coordinator, for example, used his involvement in the classroom as a "hook" to get fathers involved. By being able to report to fathers on his impressions of the child's developmental milestones, he helped fathers realize that they were missing out by not being involved. Several programs that served Hispanic

families found that many fathers believed it was the mothers' responsibility to educate and raise the children. Having male fatherhood staff in the classroom provided an example to these fathers of men who were comfortable caring for and showing tenderness toward young children. Staff in nine programs also found success engaging fathers by involving both Early Head Start staff and fatherhood staff in family home visits. Because Early Head Start staff were often female, they reported that having a male present during home visits was especially helpful in working with fathers who were difficult to engage.

ACTIVITIES DESIGNED FOR FATHERS

During the second year of implementation, the demonstration programs expanded their efforts to involve fathers in existing services; they also implemented a broad range of new activities designed specifically for fathers. Through assessment and case management, programs identified a few interests and needs that commonly emerged among Early Head Start fathers. In particular, programs found that men most often wanted support in their roles as fathers, as well as help in becoming financially self-sufficient and economically stable.

Maintaining Father Participation in Peer Support Groups Required Creative Thinking by Fatherhood Staff and Incentives for Fathers

Nearly all of the 21 demonstration grantees offered some form of peer support for fathers. These support groups for men typically served two key objectives. First, they provided a forum for fatherhood staff to impart knowledge to help men become the best father possible. Second, men had the opportunity at these meetings to share their experiences as parents and learn from each other. Through these groups, staff hoped to draw fathers out and help them become more comfortable talking and sharing with other men.



KEEPING FATHER INTERESTED IN PEER SUPPORT GROUPS



One fatherhood specialist at The Redland Christian Migrant Association (Immokalee, FL) described a three-step process for engaging fathers in peer support groups. First, he worked with mothers to encourage fathers to attend monthly parent meetings. Second, he held break-out sessions for fathers during parent meetings to allow them to get to know the fatherhood staff and other fathers. Third, he created separate support groups for fathers with the base of men who were already actively engaged in parent meetings. To maintain father attendance at father discussion groups, the fatherhood staff targeted discussion topics to the particular interests of men within their community. Given the large proportion of migrant farmworkers served by the program, fatherhood staff covered such topics as pesticides and injury prevention and gun safety, in addition to the common topics of nutrition, child development, physical health, and domestic violence. In response to the fathers' requests, the group also covered "how to talk to teachers" to help fathers become more comfortable working with the Early Head Start teaching staff.

While both staff and fathers reported that peer support groups were relevant and useful, many programs found it difficult to maintain high levels of father attendance. As shown in Table V.2, only 22 percent of fatherhood coordinators reported that more than half of the fathers actively attended support groups. More than a third of the programs were able to engage fewer than 20 percent of fathers in these groups. While some men enjoyed the opportunity to share their experiences, others reported during focus groups that they felt uncomfortable “opening up” to Early Head Start staff and other fathers. Due to lack of interest among fathers, one program completely discontinued its meetings. Three other programs decided to hold breakout sessions for fathers during family activities or parenting events, instead of regular support group meetings.

Most groups met monthly or every two weeks, with a smaller number of programs offering weekly meetings. A few rural programs offered groups at more than one center to minimize the need for fathers to travel long distances to meetings. The sessions typically began with a meal, followed by an hour or so of discussion. Fatherhood staff at about half of the programs used a standard curriculum, such as the NPCL fatherhood curriculum, to facilitate their meetings. Common topics were child development, techniques for child discipline, anger management, conflict resolution, child support, and relationship skills.

Table V.2: Father Involvement in Activities Designed for Fathers

	Percentage of Fatherhood Coordinators Reporting Level of Father Participation
Men's Support Group Focused on a Variety of Topics	
A few fathers (up to 20%)	38.9
Some fathers (20 to 50%)	38.9
Many or most fathers (more than 50%)	22.2
Sporting Events for Men	
A few fathers (up to 20%)	21.1
Some fathers (20 to 50%)	36.8
Many or most fathers (more than 50%)	15.8
Not applicable (program does not offer service)	26.3
Fixing Up the EHS Grounds, Painting, Repairing Building, or Lawn Mowing	
A few fathers (up to 20%)	36.8
Some fathers (20 to 50%)	5.3
Many or most fathers (more than 50%)	11.1
Not applicable (program does not offer service)	47.4
Activities for Father and Child Only	
A few fathers (up to 20%)	26.3
Some fathers (20 to 50%)	47.4
Many or most fathers (more than 50%)	15.8
Not applicable (program does not offer service)	10.5
Sample Size	19

Source: Early Head Start Fatherhood Demonstration Staff Survey.

Success in raising participation at peer support groups depended heavily on the creativity and enthusiasm of program staff. Programs adopted a variety of strategies to appeal to a broad range of fathers and keep them engaged in support group activities. Several programs discovered that fathers wanted skills-based services, and thus organized their support groups with a slightly more traditional classroom atmosphere where the fatherhood staff member acted as both teacher and facilitator. Two programs organized their fatherhood meetings as a workshop series to allow fathers to “graduate” from the program and receive a certificate of achievement. Through these workshops, men were not only sharing their experiences as fathers, but were learning about child development concepts that helped them relate better to the Early Head Start teachers and home visitors. Many fathers who participated in these workshops reported feeling more confident in their ability to actively participate in their child’s education and more motivated and interested in observing their child’s growth and development over time.

To prevent the groups from becoming stagnant, some programs switched the focus of their meeting each week. For example, one program offered job readiness workshops every other week and more traditional peer support group meetings on the opposing weeks. Another program used the NPCL curriculum during the first week of the month, switched to a “rap” session format during the second week, held a father-child activity on the third week, and finished the month with a co-parenting session for fathers and mothers. Several programs also invited guest speakers from the community to discuss special topics of interest to the fathers.

Staff believed that gaining fathers’ trust was also essential in developing successful father support groups. Father-only events, outside of their normal support group meetings, allowed fathers to get to know each other and develop trusting relationships with fatherhood staff. Staff reported that fathers responded well to these opportunities to get together informally. Two programs had overnight retreats or camping trips for fathers. Another collaborated with the local park and wildlife service to organize a trip for fathers to learn how to use fishing to bond with their children. About three-quarters of programs offered sporting events for fathers, with more than half successfully involving over 20 percent of fathers in these activities (Table V.2). And several programs organized fatherhood meetings around televised sporting events, finding success in combining sports, food, and group discussion.

Offering incentives was viewed by staff as another useful strategy for encouraging fathers to participate in focus groups. Food was offered at almost all fatherhood meetings. A small number of programs gave fathers T-shirts with the program’s fatherhood logo. A few offered tickets to local sporting events as door prizes or special incentives to fathers who participated regularly in meetings. Fathers from two programs received gym memberships as part of the fatherhood program. Finally, two programs decided to offer cash payments to participating fathers. At one, fathers received \$25 for participating in each weekly session; to keep fathers coming back, the payment was distributed at the following session. The other program offered each father \$200 plus an all-expenses-paid weekend for his family when he had completed the full 14-week series of fatherhood workshops.

Employment and Training Services Addressed One of the Most Common Needs Identified Among Fathers

Unemployment prevents many Early Head Start fathers from becoming financially responsible for their children. As discussed in Chapter I, across the 21 demonstration programs, approximately 26 percent of identified fathers were unemployed, more than four times the national unemployment rate of 6.0 percent in April 2003.¹ Contributing to this high unemployment, nearly 40 percent of fathers did not have a high school diploma or general equivalency degree (GED). Staff in several demonstration programs found that fathers who developed marketable skills and found employment in better-paying jobs reported higher self-esteem and confidence in their ability to provide financially and emotionally for their children. Nearly 80 percent of all staff who responded to our survey indicated that involving fathers in successful employment or education was a primary objective of the demonstration.

According to staff reports, one-third of identified fathers in the demonstration programs faced significant barriers to finding and keeping a stable job. Table V.3 identifies the barriers most commonly reported by Early Head Start fatherhood staff. Problems with transportation posed the greatest burden, with staff reporting that 12 percent of fathers across the 21 programs lacked a valid driver's license or access to reliable transportation. African American fathers, in particular, were almost twice as likely to face these transportation hurdles than other fathers. By contrast, Hispanic fathers more often had problems speaking English or did not have a green card or proper identification. White fathers were more likely than other men to have health problems or disabilities that inhibited their ability to work.



INNOVATIVE STRATEGIES TO OFFER EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING ASSISTANCE



Community Services for Children (Allentown, PA) and Next Door Foundation (Milwaukee, WI) created 6- and 8-week job readiness workshops specifically designed to increase the employability of the fathers of Early Head Start children. Action for Bridgeport Community Development (Bridgeport, CT) housed its fatherhood initiative within its Employment Services division of the agency, creating a natural link with the full range of education and employment services, including collaborative programs with local unions and employers. The CompuDads developed by Community Action Corporation of South Texas (Alice, TX) offered computer repair skills training to 20 participating fathers, along with weekly fatherhood sessions and individual case management. Babyland Family Services (Newark, NJ) helped fathers with their resumes and interviewing skills, connected fathers to job and training fairs with cooperating employers and training centers, and held weekly "cyber nights" to help fathers with computer literacy. Action for Boston Community Development (Dorchester, MA) linked customers to local education and training programs, as well as job search assistance in the one-stop system. The Fatherhood Coordinator used contacts in these agencies and personally escorted fathers to show them how to use the facilities and where to ask for assistance.

¹ More information on unemployment rates is available from the Bureau of Labor Statistics within the U.S. Department of Labor (<http://www.bls.gov/>).

Table V.3: Staff Reports of Fathers' Challenges to Finding and Keeping Jobs (Percentage of Fathers Facing Each Challenge)

	All Fathers	Currently Employed		Has High School Diploma or GED		Race/Ethnicity				
		Yes	No	Yes	No	White	Black	American Indian	Hispanic	Other
Any Challenges to Finding and Keeping a Job	35.0	20.4	77.6*	25.3	49.5*	33.7	38.0	30.8	32.1	77.3
Types of Challenges										
Problems with transportation	12.3	7.3	27.1*	9.7	16.0*	11.8	19.9	11.5	8.5	31.8*
Problems speaking English	7.3	6.5	9.9	1.8	15.0*	1.1	0.0	0.0	12.1	27.3*
Health problems or disabilities	7.2	1.3	26.0*	8.1	6.8	15.5	5.8	7.7	2.8	31.8*
Lack of a green card	4.9	5.5	3.1	1.1	10.2*	0.5	0.0	0.0	9.5	0.0*
Lack of proper identification	4.3	4.7	3.1	1.1	8.5*	1.1	0.0	0.0	8.2	0.0*
Trouble reading or writing	3.7	3.0	6.3*	0.5	9.6*	3.2	0.6	0.0	3.6	27.3*
Problems with alcohol or drugs	1.7	0.8	3.6	1.8	1.4	1.6	2.9	0.0	1.3	0.0*
No permanent place to live	1.7	1.0	3.6*	1.8	1.0	1.1	2.3	3.8	1.3	0.0
Lack of child care	1.0	0.7	2.1	0.7	1.0	1.6	0.0	7.7	0.3	9.1*
Other	11.3	4.8	29.7*	9.5	14.3	9.1	18.7	19.2	8.7	13.6*
Sample Size	1,388	854	282	633	414	284	302	47	587	33

Source: Early Head Start Fatherhood Demonstration father/father figure information forms.

Note: Data pertain to those fathers who participated in the Early Head Start program within the past 6 months.

*The difference between subgroups is significant at the .05 level, two-tailed test.

Employment and training services at several grantees drew large numbers of men into the Early Head Start program and addressed the critical need for fathers to become economically stable. Site visits revealed that six programs focused heavily on linking fathers to employment and training services. Some of these programs offered direct services, while others worked with community collaborators to link fathers to employment and training services available within their communities. Approximately 55 percent of fathers who participated in these six programs received education services, and 53 percent received employment services, compared to only 24 percent and 16 percent, respectively, in the other 15 programs.

Staff reported that attrition was the main drawback to focusing heavily on employment and training services. A large proportion of fathers who were successfully placed in employment with help from Early Head Start staff no longer returned to the program to participate in other activities. Most programs had not yet developed strategies to counteract this phenomenon and keep fathers engaged in the program.

CHAPTER VI

HOW ARE PROGRAMS MEETING CHILD SUPPORT NEEDS?

A key requirement of the demonstration grant was that participating Early Head Start programs work with their local Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE) to increase fathers' ability to financially support their children. The federal OCSE was established to oversee the child support enforcement program, which provides services to increase noncustodial parents' financial support for their children.¹ Each state, however, was given the flexibility to select the most effective way to administer its statewide child support enforcement program. As a result, the Early Head Start fatherhood demonstration programs needed to work with a wide range of agencies at the local level. The grant also gave the demonstration programs and local OCSEs the flexibility to develop their own strategies for getting Early Head Start fathers more involved. This chapter describes the strategies that developed over the first two years of the demonstration and the child support services that resulted from these collaborations. We then turn to the perceptions of local staff of the effects that the collaborations had on the partners and participating fathers.

STRATEGIES FOR PROVIDING CHILD SUPPORT SERVICES TO EARLY HEAD START FATHERS

Most Early Head Start program staff placed a high priority on getting fathers to support their children financially (Figure VI.1). Approximately 16 percent of biological fathers, including 36 percent of nonresident biological fathers, were paying child support at the time of the second round of site visits, according to staff reports (Table VI.1). Half of the Early Head Start directors and fatherhood coordinators who responded to the survey reported that involving more fathers in child support was an "important" objective for their fatherhood initiatives, and about one-third reported that it was moderately important. In five programs,

¹ OCSE's services include locating noncustodial parents, establishing paternity, establishing child support awards, and collecting child support payments. It generally is not involved in settling custody and visitation issues between parents.

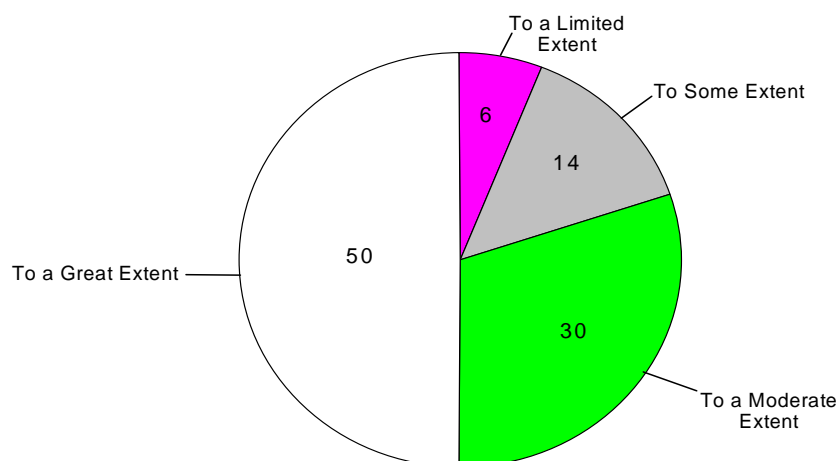
the perceived need for involving fathers in child support enforcement may have been lower because more than half of enrolled children lived with their biological fathers.

Partnerships Involved Both Formal and Informal Agreements with Local OCSE and Intermediaries

By the second year of the demonstration, 17 of the 21 demonstration programs were collaborating at some level with their local OCSE; 11 of the 17 collaborations had developed written agreements or a memorandum of understanding that spelled out each party's responsibilities. This represented a slight increase over the eight formal agreements identified in the first year of the demonstration (Bellotti 2002). The remaining six programs had established informal working arrangements with their local OCSE.

Of the four Early Head Start programs that had not yet formed a partnership with OCSE, three were working with intermediaries. One intermediary was a circuit court program contracted by OCSE to investigate and make recommendations as well as enforce, modify custody, visitation, and child support agreements. Another intermediary helped fathers who were referred by OCSE because they were having difficulty fulfilling their child-support obligations. The third intermediary was a not-for-profit legal agency that the Early Head Start program had contracted to provide legal services to its fathers. All of these programs, including the one not working with an intermediary, were still trying to establish a working relationship with the local OCSE.

Figure VI.1: Extent to Which Involving Fathers in Financial Child Support Was a Goal of Father Involvement (Percentage of Directors and Fatherhood Coordinators)



Source: Early Head Start Fatherhood Demonstration Staff Survey.

Staff Turnover at Early Head Start and Local OCSEs Disrupted Several Partnerships

In nearly all cases, the local OCSEs designated a liaison, usually a community relations or outreach specialist, to work with the Early Head Start fatherhood demonstration program. Similar to the first year of implementation, contacts between Early Head Start and OCSE typically occurred by telephone on an as-needed basis, ranging in frequency from sporadic contacts to regular discussions as often as twice a month. Several Early Head Start programs placed an OCSE representative on their policy council or board. While it is unclear whether these more structured relationships were beneficial, staff believed that they helped solidify these typically fragile partnerships.

Several partnerships were greatly affected by organizational changes as shifts in staff disrupted established staffing networks. One Early Head Start program stopped contacting the OCSE after it underwent a staff reorganization and responsibility for the collaboration was not designated to a new staff member. Another was unable to maintain contact with OCSE after it experienced turnover among fatherhood staff. In another partnership, contacts between the Early Head Start program and the OCSE became more restricted after the OCSE supervisor was replaced by someone less focused on community partnerships. In contrast, one Early Head Start program saw its collaboration with the OCSE broaden with a new OCSE administrator who was more open to collaborations than his predecessor had been.

**Table VI.1: Early Head Start Father Participation in Child Support Services
(Percentage of Biological Fathers)**

	All Biological Fathers	Nonresident Biological Fathers	Resident Biological Fathers	
			Not Married to Mother	Married to Mother
Pays Child Support ^a	15.7	36.4	9.1	8.0
Participated in Child Support Workshop	19.7	25.7	18.0	18.9
Sample Size	1,139	290	306	472

Source: Early Head Start Fatherhood Demonstration Father/Father Figure Information Forms.

Note: Data pertain to biological fathers how participated in at least one Early Head Start activity within the past 6 months.

^aThe wording of the question did not specify whether the father was paying child support for the enrolled child. Therefore, some men may be paying child support for children other than the focus child enrolled in Early Head Start.

SERVICES PROVIDED UNDER PARTNERSHIPS WITH OCSE

The types of specialized child support services offered to Early Head Start fathers appeared to be associated with selection of the collaborating organization. That is, programs that partnered with a local OCSE were more likely to offer informational workshops; whereas the few that partnered with an intermediary more often provided specialized services to help individual fathers with their child support cases.

Direct Partnerships with a Local OCSE Typically Focused on Providing Child Support Information

As had occurred during the first year of the demonstration, most of the partnerships focused on disseminating information on child support, usually through workshops and printed materials. Of the 17 Early Head Start programs collaborating with their local OCSE, 14 reported holding workshops on child support, twice as many as the previous year. Another two partnerships were planning workshops at the time of the second round of site visits. At least eight of the partnerships held workshops for staff—in most cases, for all staff—but three programs reported holding workshops only for the fatherhood staff. About half held workshops led by OCSE staff for Early Head Start fathers.² Two of the partnerships believed that opening the workshops to Early Head Start mothers was also important. In addition, at least seven programs indicated that they received child support literature to distribute to parents.

As Table VI.1 shows, 26 percent of nonresident biological fathers and 19 percent of resident biological fathers attended a child support meeting or workshop within the past 6 months.³ Several fatherhood coordinators noted how difficult it was to get fathers to attend these workshops. Many fathers were hostile toward OCSE because they believed the agency was excessively punitive and did not provide the services they needed, such as assistance with access and visitation. At the time of the site visits, some programs were still struggling with the best format for meetings and method of presenting materials, so that fathers felt comfortable attending such sessions.

The focus on information dissemination seemed natural, given that local OCSEs normally provided this service within the community and thus required no new staff or training. In some cases, the focus dovetailed with the goals of the OCSE, as in the case of

² One partnership, led by the Early Head Start program, helped coordinate and publicize an OCSE workshop for noncustodial parents in the area. The program printed and distributed hundreds of flyers. Although no one showed up for the workshop, this does illustrate another way to use the partnership.

³ Since some father figures may have also had child support obligations of their own, they were included in outreach efforts. The data provided by the programs indicate that about 12 percent of father figures participated in child support workshops in the past 6 months.

several agencies that were trying to improve the image of the child support system among noncustodial parents. Similarly, one administrator reported that the Early Head Start workshops helped his office fulfill the desire of the state's OCSE to have local offices engage in community outreach.

In addition to workshops on child support, several collaborations helped fathers with their individual child support cases. Generally, local OCSEs can modify support orders or, in some cases, adjust arrearages or interests on arrearages. The local OCSE also can refer fathers who are having difficulty fulfilling their obligations to collaborative partners for assistance. At least seven OCSEs reported having links to employment and training programs within their communities. Five of the 17 Early Head Start programs working with their local OCSE referred fathers to them for direct assistance with child support issues; two had not made any referrals, although their partnership agreement specified procedures for such referrals. In a few cases, fatherhood staff members followed up with the OCSE on issues raised by the fathers in their programs. Only two Early Head Start programs reported negotiating on behalf of the fathers. One program tried to get driver's licenses restored, and, in another program, the project director negotiated with the OCSE on issues related to arrearages, driver's license reinstatement, and employment training.

Confidentiality issues and the lack of child support expertise among Early Head Start staff made it difficult for the partnerships to focus on specific issues individual fathers had with child support. Both the OCSE and Early Head Start programs typically had confidentiality protocols that impeded the sharing of information. One OCSE was willing to share information with the Early Head Start program, if the father signed a consent form. One Early Head Start program had its participating fathers sign a consent form that allowed the program to release information to OCSE.⁴ In addition to confidentiality issues, many Early Head Start staff generally did not have expertise in working with the child support system. As a result, these staff members were unable to negotiate on behalf of the fathers in their disputes with the OCSE.

Early Head Start Partnerships with Intermediaries Focused on Specialized Services for Fathers

The services provided by Early Head Start programs working with intermediaries differed from those provided by programs in direct partnerships with OCSE. None of the programs working with intermediaries offered workshops on child support enforcement; instead, they focused on providing specialized services for individual fathers. This emphasis was most evident in the Early Head Start program that contracted with a legal services agency. The agency advocated on behalf of fathers for modifications on support orders,

⁴ The OCSEs did not appear to be interested in using the Early Head Start programs to help in locating noncustodial parents. Only one OCSE, which had not been open to collaborating, asked the Early Head Start program to provide it with a list of the fathers in the program.

arrearages, and the reinstatement of suspended driver's licenses. Another intermediary provided the Early Head Start program with a small grant to send the fatherhood coordinator to child support conferences for training and to cover legal services for several fathers. In addition, the intermediary was able to help enforce visitation agreements. The third intermediary worked with difficult child support cases referred by the OCSE. While not all Early Head Start fathers were eligible for these services, the intermediary's lawyers would intervene on the behalf of eligible men and fast-track these fathers into job- and life-skills training, mental health, and substance abuse programs.



OFFERING LEGAL ASSISTANCE TO FATHERS WITH CHILD SUPPORT ISSUES



The Next Door Foundation (Milwaukee, WI) contracted with a local organization, Legal Action, to provide Early Head Start fathers with legal assistance related to child support issues. Charging a discounted hourly rate, Legal Action worked with the local OCSE to negotiate child support modifications and adjustments to arrearages, assist in legal paternity establishment, and recover driver's licenses. In one instance, Legal Action helped an Early Head Start father obtain legal custody for his child whom the mother had left in his care and for whom he was still under obligation to pay child support to the mother. In cases where staff from the Next Door Foundation can help fathers more cost effectively, Legal Action referred the case back to the fatherhood staff with instructions on how to help the father. In such cases, fatherhood staff helped fathers complete child support paperwork, accompanied fathers to child support hearings, and wrote letters to the court to verify fathers' involvement in the fatherhood initiative.

Few Local OCSEs Disseminated Information on Early Head Start Services

Most of the partnerships focused on disseminating information on child support; few of them were involved in the distribution of materials on Early Head Start. Only one local OCSE mailed literature on services provided by Early Head Start to its clients. Similarly, only two programs reported including provisions in their collaborative agreement to have the OCSE refer clients to the Early Head Start program. Finally, one of the Early Head Start programs that partnered with an intermediary had its fatherhood coordinator present material on the importance of parent involvement and team parenting during quarterly workshops held at the intermediary for noncustodial parents.

PERCEIVED EFFECTS OF COLLABORATIONS BETWEEN EARLY HEAD START AND OCSE

According to local staff, some changes appeared to be taking place as a result of the collaborations between these demonstration programs and the local OCSEs. This study was not designed to assess the impact of the collaborations. However, according to some respondents, some positive changes appear to have occurred in the attitudes and practices of Early Head Start and OCSE staff and in the behavior of noncustodial fathers.

Several OCSE administrators indicated that, as a result of their interaction with the Early Head Start program, they were more aware of the life circumstances and concerns of noncustodial fathers. One administrator, for example, explained that the collaboration made him realize that the noncustodial father was not always at fault in child support disputes. While this knowledge did not appear to lead to any procedural changes, it may have had an impact on staff decisions and attitudes. Another administrator reported that what he learned from contacts with Early Head Start fathers may make a difference in how he decides to handle future cases with unclear dispositions. A third administrator said he planned to incorporate what he learned from Early Head Start fathers into OCSE staff training.

Local staff believed that collaborations between Early Head Start and the OCSE may have led more Early Head Start fathers to become involved in the child support system. The program providing legal services to fathers through an intermediary appeared to have achieved some success in engaging more fathers in the system. The local OCSE told the legal services agency that a significantly larger proportion of the agency's clients were paying child support, compared to the rates of other noncustodial parents. The agency attributed the greater compliance to their clients' belief that legal representation helped them receive fair outcomes. Although they had no hard evidence, several OCSE administrators also believed that the collaborations with Early Head Start had resulted in the establishment of more paternity and child support orders, as well as a greater number of child support payments.

Staff at the Early Head Start programs also felt more confident in their skills in handling child support issues. The fatherhood staff at a number of Early Head Start programs conducted workshops on child support enforcement for Early Head Start staff and fathers. One home visitor who received training on child support helped a custodial father who was not receiving child support payments from the child's mother get and complete child support forms and write a letter to OCSE. Other home visitors were pleased that they now had materials on child support to distribute to families when the need arose.

Finally, the collaborations appeared to have helped some Early Head Start fathers. According to staff reports, several fathers in the program had their child support orders modified, their obligations reduced, and their driver's license reinstated. In turn, providing this type of assistance to help fathers meet their child support obligations will, in theory, help fathers become more stable sources of financial support for their children.

CHAPTER VII

LESSONS LEARNED

The experiences of the Early Head Start Fatherhood Demonstration grantees can help guide policymakers, program administrators, and practitioners as they design and implement new initiatives to increase fathers' involvement in Early Head Start and the lives of their children. Through the evaluation of the first two years of demonstration operation, we have derived a number of operational lessons about designing, implementing, and supporting such fatherhood initiatives. This chapter focuses on lessons about staffing structures, efforts by programs to become father-friendly, father recruitment and engagement, service offerings and referrals, and partnerships with OCSE.

LESSONS RELATED TO FATHERHOOD STAFFING STRUCTURES

In developing a staffing structure for a fatherhood initiative, program administrators may find it useful to consider three key functions of fatherhood staff: (1) program development, (2) program management and administration, and (3) direct provision of services to fathers. Several staffing structures emerged in the demonstration programs over time that accommodate the range of responsibilities for working with fathers. Hiring qualified staff, encouraging coordination between fatherhood and other Early Head Start staff, and weathering staff turnover proved challenging for many of these new fatherhood initiatives.

Choosing a fatherhood staffing structure. Staffing structures that feature a fatherhood coordinator and one or more male involvement specialists appear to facilitate the effective allocation of responsibility for fatherhood work. In the demonstration programs, this model typically designated responsibility for program development and administration to the coordinator, which allowed specialists to focus more heavily on working directly with fathers. While other staffing structures may be less expensive and may work under the right conditions, they also appear to have some significant disadvantages. Given that fatherhood work was a new program area not yet well defined, many fatherhood staff described the need for an intensive focus aimed at changing the program culture and developing relevant services for men. Staff who split their time between fatherhood work and other responsibilities sometimes lacked sufficient time to accommodate the substantial demands of running a fatherhood program. Programs that hire male involvement specialists to cover each Early Head Start center may experience a lack of leadership if no single staff member has overall responsibility for the development and coordination of the fatherhood initiative.

Determining the qualifications of fatherhood staff. To engage fathers effectively, fatherhood staff need academic qualifications paired with strong interpersonal and communication skills. Training in social work and experience in community organizing were common among demonstration fatherhood staff and provided a solid foundation for offering guidance to individual fathers and cultivating community support for the program. Programs found that personal and professional abilities, such as charisma, familiarity with the community, and experience with program administration, also made staff more effective in reaching out to Early Head Start fathers and meeting their needs. In addition, many fathers felt more comfortable discussing personal needs with male, as opposed to female, fatherhood staff.

Hiring fathers as staff members. Participating or graduate fathers may serve as a valuable pool of potential staff candidates. Fathers often know their communities well and may easily relate to and serve as mentors for other fathers in the program. The presence of fathers on staff also sends a strong signal of inclusiveness to other men, although finding fathers who are well qualified for available positions may be challenging. Depending on fathers' backgrounds and previous work experience, supervisors may find it necessary to provide fathers with substantial professional mentoring in order to ease their transition into a staff role and the Early Head Start work environment.

Encouraging communication between fatherhood and other Early Head Start staff. Frequent communication among fatherhood and other Early Head Start staff facilitates father involvement in all aspects of Early Head Start. Fatherhood staff placed in the same organizational unit as other Early Head Start staff members and those who had an "open-door policy" for questions from other staff appeared better able to coordinate comprehensive services for families.

Weathering fatherhood staff turnover. More than half of the demonstration programs lost one or more members of their fatherhood staff during two years of implementation. Programs that had some advance notice of staff departures or that hired replacement staff from within the organization had less difficulty dealing with staff turnover. Involving all Early Head Start staff in providing services for fathers also helped programs weather staff turnover without major disruption to their efforts to engage fathers. Family workers, teachers, and home visitors who had substantial direct contact with fathers, and were well informed about their family circumstances, were better prepared to continue serving them in the event that fatherhood staff members left the program.

LESSONS RELATED TO BECOMING MORE FATHER FRIENDLY

The demonstration programs considered being "father-friendly" a critical factor in their ability to engage fathers in Early Head Start services. Father-friendliness can be broadly defined as the extent to which the Early Head Start program and staff convey a welcoming message to fathers and offer services that meet fathers' needs. While all the demonstration programs adopted multiple strategies for becoming father-friendly, staff perceived some strategies to be more effective than others.

Training staff for work with fathers. Staff training on father involvement appears to be critical for programs that intend to become father-friendly. Some female staff members may have had negative personal experiences with men, and that these experiences can sometimes color their attitudes toward engaging fathers in the program. According to staff reports, internal staff training sessions on the importance of father involvement can be successful in making staff more receptive to including men. Given that many negative attitudes and perceptions were deeply ingrained, ongoing staff training was also viewed as essential in maintaining the support of female staff.

Evaluating all Early Head Start staff on their work with fathers. Evaluating staff on their efforts to involve fathers is another way to send a clear signal to staff that father involvement is an important, and expected, part of their jobs. Including these evaluations as part of the performance assessment process for all Early Head Start staff could serve to cement the intent of the programs' fatherhood policies and to spur staff to greater efforts to include fathers.

Providing fathers with personal staff attention. Inviting fathers in person and by telephone to the program's events shows fathers that they are welcome and appreciated at Early Head Start. All Early Head Start staff can also be encouraged to learn fathers' names, engage fathers in short conversations whenever possible, invite them to participate in the classroom and home visits, and extend invitations to special program events. In the focus groups, many fathers stressed that invitations from staff members played an important part in the types and number of activities they chose to attend at Early Head Start.

Overcoming resistance from mothers. Several home-visiting staff reported that they encountered resistance from mothers about including fathers—in part, because that might interfere with the close relationship that had developed between the mother and the home visitor. Programs may benefit from allowing staff sufficient time to redouble their efforts to address mothers' concerns and encourage them to cooperate with fathers. The attitudes of some mothers may be amenable to intervention, at least in cases where domestic abuse is not involved, as well as other instances where programs might legitimately exclude particular fathers. Additional activities, such as formal staff training in how to encourage mothers and fathers to work cooperatively, may be beneficial. In cases when mothers are resentful of special services for fathers, creating parallel activities and groups for mothers may ease these tensions.

Allowing staff time and flexibility to work with fathers when they are available. As programs work with staff members who have responsibility for recruiting fathers, program directors may find it important to evaluate whether staff members have sufficient time to conduct these activities during regular work hours. The barriers posed by fathers' work schedule may be addressed through program policies that allow staff flexibility in scheduling their work when fathers are available (and in staffing willingness to adapt their schedules in these ways). Giving staff sufficient time to reach out to men and allowing this type of flexibility in their work schedules may also help make it clear to the staff that fathers are expected to participate fully in the program and encourage them to promote fathers' involvement from the beginning of enrollment.

Making the physical program environment father-friendly. Displaying positive images of men and ensuring that male staff and fathers are present whenever possible in reception areas and classrooms helps convey that Early Head Start is a program for fathers, as well as mothers and children. In addition, where possible, providing private office space or meeting rooms for fatherhood staff to meet individually with fathers appears to facilitate their ability to talk openly about fathers' personal issues.

Assessing staff perceptions of progress toward father-friendliness. Demonstration staff were asked to rate their programs' stage of development toward father-friendliness. While most staff within a given program were generally in agreement on these ratings, a few programs had marked disagreements among staff. These findings display a serious division among staff opinions. We suggest that program directors continually assess their staff members' perceptions of progress made toward program goals and may avoid such discrepancies by implementing some of the strategies discussed above to help institutionalize the idea of father involvement and provide staff with the time and resources to do that work well.

LESSONS RELATED TO GETTING AND KEEPING FATHERS INVOLVED

All demonstration programs agreed that the recruitment of fathers was a significant challenge that should not be underestimated. The programs faced a broad range of challenges when trying to make initial contact with fathers and subsequently attempting to engage them in program activities. Based on discussions with demonstration staff, the evaluation identified promising practices for recruiting and engaging fathers.

Involving fathers in Early Head Start family enrollment. Family enrollment is the earliest opportunity to identify and recruit fathers. To maximize the potential of this opportunity, programs might consider revising their enrollment procedures to ensure that fathers are present whenever possible, to highlight the fatherhood program regardless of whether the father is able to attend, and to collect father information through enrollment forms. To facilitate delivery of services to fathers, enrollment staff might also develop a mechanism for passing father enrollment information to the staff members responsible for male recruitment.

Making all staff responsible for engaging fathers. Fatherhood staff naturally have responsibility for reaching out to fathers. However, other Early Head Start staff members also have many different points of contact with fathers and may succeed in reaching out to them. As discussed earlier, face-to-face contact between fathers and staff was consistently identified as one of the most successful techniques for engaging men. This reinforces the need to train all staff members on the importance of father involvement and to assess how effectively they reach out to men.

Taking advantage of every opportunity to engage fathers. To successfully engage fathers, program staff can think of ways to include fathers in all phases of their work. When fathers drop off or pick up their children from Early Head Start centers, teachers and other

program staff present during those times have an opportunity to relay information about programs to the fathers, invite them into the classroom for informal activities with their children, or just talk to fathers about their children's day. Food or other refreshments offered during those times is another way for staff and fathers to get to know each other. Further, home visitors can engage fathers who are present at the time of visits, regardless of whether the father chooses to actively participate.

Mailing information and invitations to fathers. While mailings to fathers were one of the most common strategies that demonstration programs used to recruit fathers, many staff did not find them useful. Programs serving migrant or transient populations found mailings especially unproductive. Including fathers' names on mailings when they live with the mother and child, and sending duplicate materials to nonresident fathers, can impress upon fathers that they are welcome at Early Head Start. However, given the lack of success reported by demonstration staff, we suggest that program directors or fatherhood staff reassess the characteristics of the population they serve before determining the volume and frequency of mailings that would be the most appropriate for their program.

LESSONS RELATED TO SERVICE OFFERINGS AND REFERRALS FOR FATHERS

The demonstration programs adopted an innovative set of services to meet fathers' needs. The grantees made an effort to involve fathers in existing activities and designed new services targeted specifically for fathers. No single activity drew the majority of men; instead, father participation spanned a broad range of activities. The grantees found that determining the most appropriate mix of services for men was an ongoing process.

Assessing fathers' needs. The demonstration programs had difficulty involving fathers in the family partnership agreement (FPA) process that allows families to identify their strengths and needs and set their own goals. Those that have not fully integrated case management for fathers into the existing Early Head Start service structure may find it difficult to identify and respond to fathers' needs once funding for the fatherhood demonstration ends. The experience of the demonstration programs shows that fathers of Early Head Start children have an array of needs that must be addressed; yet these needs may go unmet in the future if programs do not become more proactive about engaging fathers in the FPA process or do not find alternative ways to provide similar services.

Providing fathers with opportunities to bond with their children and families. Offering father-child activities and family events is a natural way to help strengthen fathers' connections with their children and families. Fathers reported enjoying "daddy and me" time in which to play and bond with their children. The demonstration programs found success in offering holiday events and low-budget activities that families can replicate on their own. These activities demonstrated ways that families with limited resources could have fun and bond with each other outside the Early Head Start setting without spending much money. Programs may also wish to consider holding family events that recognize children's accomplishments at various points throughout the year.

Supporting positive co-parenting relationships. Most of the demonstration programs found a focus on co-parenting consistent with their program goals and responsive to family needs. Many staff members, however, did not feel comfortable providing advice to couples who were experiencing relationship problems. To help support positive co-parenting, programs can strengthen partnerships with other local agencies—such as mental health professionals, marriage and family services, and anger management counselors—that could serve as referrals for parents in need of such assistance. Programs with enough interest from parents and staff expertise might also consider offering co-parenting workshops for participating parents.

Encouraging father participation in child development services. Many fathers appear to be more comfortable participating in child development services when they are given clearly delineated roles. When working with fathers who hesitate to interact with children, teachers and home visitors can try to direct fathers toward concrete activities while explaining how the activity will benefit their children's growth. Such activities can include developmentally appropriate play, arts and crafts, help with meals, and reading books. Also, having male staff and other participating fathers present in centers may help fathers feel more comfortable participating. In addition, several programs found that some fathers were most receptive when they were able to use their existing trade skills to help improve the center facilities and grounds.

Developing successful support groups for fathers. While fathers and demonstration staff believed that peer support groups for men were useful and relevant, maintaining father participation in such groups relied heavily on the creativity of program staff. Programs found that listening to fathers' interests and needs and adjusting the structure, content, and timing of their meetings accordingly improved attendance. Offering father-only activities such as sporting events or camping trips provides another opportunity for staff and fathers to get to know each other and develop mutual trust outside the support group setting. In addition, demonstration programs found that offering men incentives—such as food, T-shirts, gym memberships, and even cash payments—for their participation was useful in keeping them coming back to group meetings.

Helping fathers find stable employment in better-paying jobs. To increase fathers' ability to support their children financially, program staff might consider strengthening their ability to link fathers with employment and training services. Some programs, including community action agencies, may be better positioned to provide direct services or have community collaborations in place to facilitate referrals for fathers. Other programs may find it more difficult (and even inconsistent with their overall mission) to build a direct employment services infrastructure. However, these programs can serve fathers by cultivating and actively using partnerships within their communities' workforce development system. As the fathers indicated in focus groups, simply providing information about these local agencies may not be sufficient to encourage them to take advantage of such services. Instead, many fathers feel more comfortable using employment and training referrals when an Early Head Start staff member accompanies them to the local agency on their first visit or puts them in contact with a counselor who is familiar with the Early Head Start fatherhood program.

LESSONS RELATED TO PARTNERSHIPS WITH LOCAL OCSE

All demonstration programs were required, as part of their grant, to partner with their local OCSE in efforts to increase fathers' ability to financially support their children. The grantees were given great flexibility in structuring these collaborations and determining the appropriate activities on which to partner. While a few partnerships offered individualized services to fathers, most of them focused on providing information to staff and parents on the child support services offered through OCSE.

Facilitating child support workshops for fathers. Most partnerships between Early Head Start and OCSE focused on disseminating child support information through workshops. Several fatherhood coordinators commented on how difficult it was to get fathers to attend child support workshops. Many fathers are hostile toward OCSE because they believe the agency is excessively punitive and does not provide the services they need, such as visitation. Indeed, a father in one of the programs remarked that the fatherhood coordinator “snuck” the OCSE administrator into the workshop by not fully disclosing what the workshop was about. Fathers may be more willing to attend workshops on child support that are led by the fatherhood staff or a representative from a legal service agency. When possible, the programs may also consider developing linkages with access and visitation programs.

Offering separate child support workshops for mothers. To reach uninvolved biological fathers, programs may need to broaden their target population for informational workshops on child support to include mothers and grandparents. One difficulty in reaching uninvolved fathers is getting contact information from the mothers. It is possible that some of these mothers may, for various reasons, be afraid to share this information with the program. In the case of teen mothers, it is sometimes the child's grandparents who object to involving the child's father. In light of this resistance, it may be important to have child support workshops for mothers and grandparents to highlight how father involvement can benefit their children both economically and emotionally. We suggest holding separate workshops for mothers and fathers, to allow open and honest discussion.

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